LPA DISTRICT 12 1986 - 1988

Creator – Harriet Stickney

S12124

S12124

#3-1986

ONE FOR THE LITTLE GUY

LPA throws dwarf-tossing for a loss.

By Craig M. McCulloh

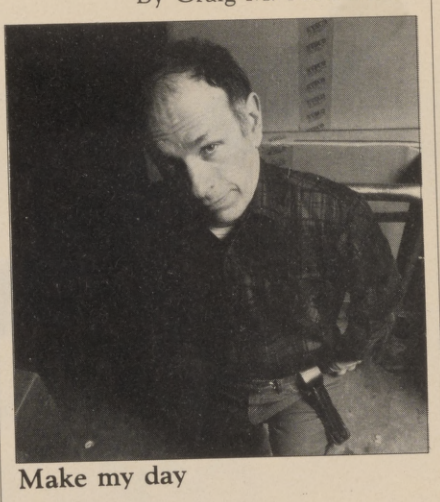
Dwarf tossing first came to attention in this country through an article six months ago in the *Wall Street Journal* about a bar contest in Australia that involved using a "dwarf" as a kind of shot-put. The person who tossed the dwarf the farthest won the contest. The article was only a prelude to more activity; several pubs in England planned or held dwarf-tossing contests, and such contests seemed ready to spread to America when, in mid-November, 1985, a pub in the city of Chicago planned a dwarf-tossing contest.

It seemed to members of the Little People of America, Inc. an association of people of shorter than average stature, that the LPA, could not afford to sit idle and let such an intolerable act take place. We were outraged. We were also upset by national syndicated columnist, Mike Royko, based in Chicago who wrote several columns about dwarf-tossing that contained irresponsible and callous comments.

In one column, he mentioned that a bar in Chicago called O'Sullivan's Public House was scheduling a contest within a few weeks. Cash prizes would be awarded to the team who could toss the dwarf the farthest. The dwarf would get a piece of the action for consenting to be a human projectile.

As soon as I read this column, real anger along with a touch of frustration set into me. It was time to go directly to the horse's mouth. I wanted equal time to offer Mr. Royko's readers a view from a human perspective, something Royko was terribly lacking. I called Royko's office. As expected, he was unavailable, but his assistant, Paul Sullivan got on the line. Mr. Sullivan appeared to be a clone of his boss, at least in attitude. He promptly received an ear-full of my anger and outrage. I told him that the and his boss did not understand the implications of what they were doing. After all, dwarfs are little people, human beings, not just object for society to toss around.

About a week and a half after the second Royko column, District 2 held their Fall Regional in Valley Forge, PA. A great deal of time was spent discussing the issue off dwarf-tossing and how LPA Inc., as an organization, should



Make my day

respond if the contest should be scheduled to take place in our communities. A number of us believed that if one contest took place, more would likely follow. It was conceivable that they could pop up all across the country until the novelty wore off. Ironically, these fears were going to be realized sooner than any of us had expected.

TWO weeks later, I got a call from our National President, Robert Van Etten. He had received some information from CBS that the dwarf-tossing contest was actually going to take place the following week in Chicago. We had to use the resources available to us to stop the contest, or at least minimize any damages that might be inflicted upon little people across the country.

The most useful resource available to us was the power of advocacy. That is, the pleading or arguing for a particular cause. We definitely had a cause, and we had to relate our cause to the people of Chicago. I called the operator for names and phone numbers of people who spend a great deal of time advocating for the rights of handicapped and disabled people. As I contacted each person or group to explain our situation, I tried to emphasize how such a contest would have an overall impact on the handicapped community and the need for them to help us fight this dehumanizing act. Most were more than willing to assist us in any way they could. I asked if they knew of people who might be able to help us. After several calls, we had many groups representing hundreds of handicapped and disabled people advocating our cause.

In Chicago, there is a very large and influential Irish-Catholic population. Knowing this, I solicited the support of the Catholic Theological Union. Father Flavin Dougherty heads a group of Catholics who work with disabled people. He said that if necesary, he would put a column in the weekly Catholic tabloid and would advocate our cause from the pulpit.

I then contacted the office of Mayor Harold Washington and was referred to the Mayor's Office for the Aging and Disabled. Mr. Jay Terry (a staff person in that office) was very influential in persuading the Mayor to issue a statement deploring the contest and having the City Solicitor's Office actually file a suit to seek a court injunction against the bar to have the contest stopped. An attorney, Leann Marshall-Cohen, from the Attorney General's Office, Division of Disability Advocacy arranged to have a meeting with the owners of the bar.

Legally speaking, there are a limited number of arguments which can be uses to stop or to interfere with a contest such as the one proposed. However, most business establishments do not want the State Attorney General's Office breathing down their necks; it is extremely bad for business. Using this kind of informal pressure, Attorney Marshall-Cohen skillfully manuevered the owners to agree to cancel the contest. All this occurred the day before the City Solicitor's Office filed a suit in court.

WE in LPA, Inc. can be proud of our accomplishments in overcoming this recent example of public prejudice toward little people. However, I must caution that the war is not over. We must continue to utilize the power of advocacy, as it can work, as long as human decency prevails. In time, more and more people will be on our side. We must also continue to be dedicated to our cause of helping people of short stature, and not be afraid to transform our anger into meaningful achievements.

—Craig McCulloh is former president of the Pennsylvania Dutch Chapter of the Little People of America, Inc.

TECHNOLOGY / JOHN ECKHOUSE

Computerized Chair Solves Many Mobility Problem

What has four wheels, a motor, a seat and climbs stairs automatically? Access, a personal transport vehicle that is a cross between a wheelchair, a tank and a computer.

Built by Natco Corp. of Foster City, the new battery-powered vehicle is designed to overcome many of the day-to-day problems encountered by people who use wheelchairs. It can climb most stairs, curbs or bumps. The vehicle's seat — which looks much more ergonomically designed than that of a conventional wheelchair — raises and lowers to fit under most desks, tables or kitchen counters. The battery can propel the chair for 25 miles on a single overnight charge and is designed to last two years.

A microprocessor built into Access also provides an uncanny amount of intelligence. If the user tries to climb at too steep an angle, a sonar sensor alerts the onboard computer and a synthesized voice says "danger, greater than 36 degree angle, stop." The computer then halts the chair and will only let the user back it down the incline.

"Ours is the only chair that can climb stairs by itself, all the others require a second person for assistance," said James Henson, vice president of marketing at Natco. "And before we even let you buy it, we make a pre-inspection of your home and workplace to make sure it's safe and to teach you about hidden hazards."

The design team at Natco, which includes two paraplegics, spent about a year and $2 million producing a prototype. Access will cost about $9500 when production begins in December. Henson said the vehicle can save as much as $30,000 by eliminating the expenses associated with remodeling a home to accommodate a newly disabled person.

"But even people living in homes without stairs need this," Henson said. "Otherwise, they would never go over many thresholds or go down the steps to the lobby bar in the Hyatt Regency Hotel."

He hopes to sell about 5000 Access vehicles when shipments begin the end of the year. That's an optimistic forecast, as only about 15,000 powered wheelchairs were sold last year.

Natco's battery-powered Access wheelchair can climb most stairs, curbs or bumps

Leg-Stretch Surgery For Dwarf Boy

Orlando, Fla.

Surgeons severed the bones in the left leg of a 13-year-old boy suffering from dwarfism yesterday and attached devices to lengthen it eight inches in the nation's first use of a European orthopedic procedure on a growing youth.

The 1½-hour operation on 3-foot-10 Juan Garcia was performed at Orlando Regional Medical Center by Dr. Chad Price of Orlando and Dr. L. Renzi Brivio, who developed the revolutionary procedure at the University of Verona in Italy.

"He's doing fine. Juan tolerated the surgery just beautifully," said Price.

"There was a minimum of bleeding and no complications whatsoever."

Renzi Brivio said the legs of the Altamonte Springs, Fla., boy should be nearly normal when the lengthening process is complete.

The process is expected to take 18 months to two years.

Stainless steel screw-tipped pins were implanted in the boy's femur and tibia to hold a foot-long device called an orthofix, which rests outside the flesh and can be expanded. Once the device was in place, the bones were severed.

As the natural callus of the severed bone ends form what is called a growth plate, the orthofix will be expanded by turning an attached key.

The leg bones will grow for four months before the device is removed and the bones allowed to fuse.

After four more months' healing time, an identical operation will be performed on Juan's right leg.

BY UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

JUAN GARCIA
13-year-old is 3-foot-10

He will be on crutches during the entire process — at one point one leg will be eight inches longer than the other.

He is expected to leave the hospital in four days.

Renzi Brivio said the boy will be in no pain and require no medication.

Although the procedure has been used extensively in Europe, and a few times on normal adults in this country, it was the first time it has been used on one of more than 20,000 dwarfs in the United States, doctors said.

Juan's parents and four siblings are of normal size.

United Press International

LEG STRETCHES

A dramatic treatment is offering hope to people born with deformed limbs and others whose limbs have been shattered or chronically infected as a result of injury.

Using concepts of bone healing and a device called a circular external fixator, pioneered by Soviet physician Gavriil A. Ilizarov, doctors in the United States and Italy are better able to mend infected fractures and lengthen and reshape deformed arms and legs.

The Ilizarov technique consists of threaded rods that screw into rings at the top and bottom of a frame custom-fitted to the patient's limb. After attaching the rings with thin wires inserted through the limb, the surgeon makes a shallow cut, or cuts, into the hard outer layers of bone. Each time the patient turns the rods, the cut ends of the bone pull apart about a hundredth of an inch. Gradually, healthy new bone, blood vessels and tissue develop to fill the gap. The process is slow and sometimes painful, but it has helped save patients with chronically infected shin bones from amputation and has helped some deformed patients achieve normal appearance.

Of 21 patients treated at the Hospital for Joint Diseases in New York, 19 achieved union of their tibial fractures that had not mended, correction of angular bony defects and equalization of leg lengths. In a recent study at the University of Maryland Hospital in Baltimore, where 400 of these procedures have been performed in the past three years, Dr. Dror Paley achieved straightening and lengthening—up to six inches—in 57 of 60 bone segments.

—Alvin Nagelberg in American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons News Release

1986

Seeing the world through the eyes of a dwarf

Richmond couple set facts straight

By Rebecca Chambers
Staff writer

RICHMOND — For Neno and Mary Jane Carlino, love unfolded like a storybook romance. Their eyes met at a Las Vegas convention, and after 25 silver years the two have plans to renew their wedding vows next month.

The Carlinos are dwarfs, and like many other such married couples, they met through a national self-help group called the Little People of America (LPA).

A glance around the cozy Carlino household shows the visitor every ounce of love went in to fixing up the family nest.

Kitchen counters and the stove range are meticulously scaled down to 29 inches — six inches shorter than average — and photographs of average-sized and short family members, including Neno's two dwarf sons from a previous marriage, adorn the walls.

Fat cushions, foot ladders and leg rests are scattered near high cupboards and chairs.

"This isn't cute," a gregarious 4'2" Neno Carlino said, his face pulling into a scowl. "We can't stand the word *cute*, it makes you feel like two cents."

"Makes you feel like freaks," Mary Jane, who is 3'9", added.

There are more than 100 different types of dwarfism, the most common of which are achondroplastic dwarfs who have average-sized heads and torsos but unusually short arms and legs. Both Neno and Mary Jane possess these common characteristics.

"We're dwarfs or little people — not midgets," Neno said. "'Midgets' is the slang."

Many little people regard "midget" as a derogatory label related to the leprechaun figures of folk tales — the troll under the bridge in "Three Billy Goats Gruff" — and the stereotype of performers in the circus or entertainment worlds.

Neno, 68, and Mary Jane, 59, met at the annual Little People of America national convention, a weeklong marathon of speeches, workshops and social activities.

"We met at a breakfast. Later Neno borrowed a car and we went down the strip. We started asking questions and that was it, we knew we were going to get married," Mary Jane said.

Mary Jane has been confined to a wheelchair since back surgery in 1980.

"After I married Neno I felt big. Before that I couldn't stand to see a little person," Mary Jane said softly about her childhood in Klamath Falls, Ore.

"If I had seen one on the street I would have turned around and gone the other way. I couldn't face myself."

She went on to describe a life with averaged-sized siblings and an overprotective father. After a trip to the state hospital when she was young, she grew up thinking rickets, a skeletal disease which softens and bends bones, caused her shortness.

Unlike her sisters and brothers, Mary Jane was prohibited from dating, driving and moving to her own apartment because of her small size, she said.

Neno, on the other hand, the son of immigrant Italian parents, was treated like his four sisters.

"My dad said, 'Go do it.' He said, 'Get that dish,' but I was a little stinker.

"I said, 'I can't, I'm too short. I was five years old then. My dad smacked me hard across the face and said, 'Get that dish.' After that I never said, 'I can't' again."

While Mary Jane was growing up in the quietude of a small town, Neno was a teen-ager in Berkeley selling newspapers on the corner of University and San Pablo avenues.

When Neno became a newsboy it was his first job and only "real" education.

"At first it got to me. 'Look mama, look at the little man,' those kids would say. That used to kill me. I tried to figure out a way to avoid them, like ducking in corners.

"Then I decided instead of avoiding them, to go to them. I'd say, "Yeah, I'm a little man, what's your name?"" he said in the tone of a loving father to a child.

"When I learned to do that I knew I had it beat, that fear of everyone looking at you."

Neno said he met his first dwarf as a young adult. "He was a carnival man. I talked with him, I was so thrilled to see him."

After its inception in 1957, Neno joined the Bay Area chapter of the Little People of America. Since then, the LPA has gained a natonal membership of more than 4,000 dwarfs and their families. In the Bay Area there are about 200 members, Harriet Stickney, president of the LPA Bay Area chapter, said.

The point of the LPA: "To bring them out of the closets, honey, to make them get out there with the rest of them," Neno said.

The LPA is the only national organization for dwarfs. In 1981 it organized a national protest against pop singer Randy Newman's song, "Short People." Last year the group opposed several dwarf-throwing contests in towns and cities

Dwarf throwing originated as a competitive sport in Australia and involves the highly controversial tossing of dwarfs.

The LPA also sponsors local and national social gatherings and provides education, health care, job referrals and more.

According to Neno, dwarfs have a lot to gain from the LPA's job referral assistance. "Back in the 1940s when I was in the shipyards, they used to say, 'Oh yeah? Prove it.' I had to show them I could do it before they'd hire me."

Stickney said that although there is still much job discrimination against dwarfs, the LPA has seen an increase during the last decade in the number of jobs obtained through referrals.

The LPA also provides dwarfs with a chance for dating and marriage, Stickney said.

Of the married members of the local chapter, at least three-quarters met through LPA meetings. Some members are married to average-sized spouses.

Stickney said one of the reasons for dwarf marriages is, "They're very comfortable because you share many of the same concerns that you don't find in average-sized situations."

Mary Jane was previously married to an average-sized man and has two daughters of average height. Neno said his two sons from a previous marriage are dwarfs who met their wives — also dwarfs — through the LPA.

Neno said he had trouble dating before joining the LPA. "Women (dwarfs) have it worse because they have to wait to be asked. But it was tough for us, too. Back in high school they had the proms. I'd never go because I was too short." Neno and Mary Jane were the only dwarfs in their schools.

"Sure it hurt," Mary Jane said. "Because if you did go out you'd be treated like a little doll."

Mary Jane said when she and Neno decided to marry, she worried about her daughters' response.

"I didn't know how I'd break it to my one daughter. She said, 'Mommy, why did you marry a little daddy?' She was worried her friends would tease her."

They worried — until they met Neno. "The girls liked him from the instant they met him."

Turning confrontational, Neno said: "The girls, they put people in their place when we're out. People say, 'Oh how cute,' and they say, 'Who's cute, haven't you ever seen little person before?' "

He added that the only thing hindering a dwarf is height. "We're as normal as you, only we can't reach as far. The only difference between you and me is I need a ladder to do it."

Staff photo/David Toer

MARY JANE AND NENO Carlino in the kitchen of their home.

'After I married Neno I felt big. Before that I couldn't stand to see a little person. If I had seen one on the street I would have turned around'
— Mary Jane Carlino

Owatonnan will receive Courage award

By GEOFF GORVIN
Press staff writer

OWATONNA — Charles Bedow is a tall man among disabled people.

The 52-year-old achondroplastic dwarf will receive a 1986 Rose and Jay Phillips Award tonight from the Courage Center, Golden Valley. He will be one of five disabled people from the five-state area who will receive the honor.

"I'm very surprised, totally surprised," said Bedow, a supervisor at Federated Insurance Company.

The award is given to disabled people who have set an example in their community by becoming independent and employed, and have made an impact on the community, said Jane Houlton, co-chairman of dedication activities. It also promotes the employment of disabled people since its conception in 1964.

"It serves as an example to the public that disabled people can be independent and self sufficient members of society," Houlton said.

A Courage Center committee selects the recipients from hundreds of nominations received each year. Those who are not selected are automatically nominated the following year. If they are not selected a second time, their names are dropped but someone can renominate them.

"These are people who are self-supporting and someone in the business community saw they could be productive," Bedow said.

Finding employment is difficult for disabled people, Bedow said. Continued failure leads to their biggest problem — discouragement.

That's where Bedow comes in. He helps counsel those people and aids them in finding employment.

"It's good to see someone humble themselves by helping someone like that," Bedow said.

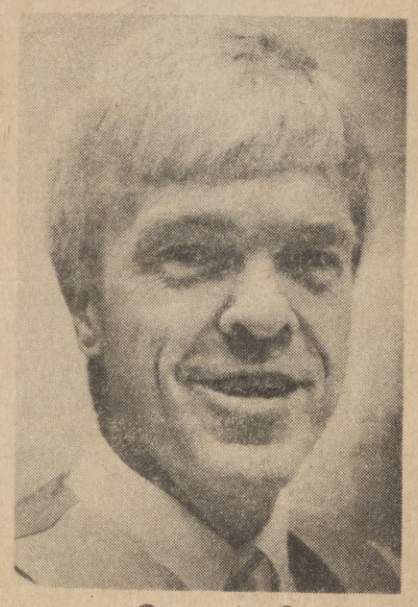
At the awards ceremony tonight, the recipients will receive a plaque and $500. The ceremony will begin at 8 p.m. and will be emceed by television personality Eddie Albert.

The keynote speaker will be 1963 Miss America Jacquelyn Townsend, who was disabled by a stroke and became a public spokesperson for the American Heart Association.

The other recipients are:

- The Rev. Bernard Brennan, 46, Duluth, a pastoral care director and chaplain at the Benedictine Health Center. He has multiple sclerosis and is partially blind.
- James Harber, 38, Fridley, a registered sales representative for Piper, Jaffray and Hopwood, Inc. He also has multiple sclerosis.
- James Heaps, 36, Eau Claire, Wis., a men's fitness center attendant at the Eau Claire YMCA. He is disabled by spina bifida.
- Nancy Heinle, 36, Dickinson, N.D., a registered occupational therapist at Dickinson's St. Joseph's Hospital. She was disabled in a 1969 car accident.

Also at the ceremony, the Courage Center will dedicate its new 40,000-square-foot addition. The addition costed $5 million and was paid for in full by private donations.



Charlie Bedow

The ceremony is free and open to the public. There will be unlimited seating. The Courage Center is a United Way-funded organization.

Record-Breaking Twins

The world's tallest identical twin brothers and world's shortest identical twin sisters — all from the U.S. — were featured recently on a Japanese TV program. Mike and Jim Lanier already stand 7 feet 4 even though they're only 16 years old. Dorene Williams and Darlene McGregor, 39, are a tiny 4 feet 1. The brothers live in Troy, Mich. Dorene is an office assistant in Oakdale, Calif., while Darlene works in a bank in Alameda, Calif.

Learning to live successfully in a 'tall' world

by Leona Nichols
Special to The Chronicle

Being a short person in a world of tall people does create some challenges for Maki Agata, a Lions Club exchange student currently living with Shirley and Bob Olson in rural Livingston. Maki, who at age 20 is a student at the University of Tokyo, is 3-feet 1-inch tall.

Maki has learned to make adjustments for her less-than-average height, and feels she is only slightly disabled. There are, however, definite inconveniences. She has had to deal with the problem of how to use the public telephone, how to purchase train tickets for her daily commute to the university, and how to wash her hands in a public washroom. With her disarming smile, she has learned to ask for help when she cannot avoid it, but has become amazingly proficient to care for her own needs in most situations.

Maki has learned to make adjustments for her less-than-average height.

Her visit here was prompted by a sudden awareness on the Olsons' part that in all the years they had seen pictures of exchange students, they had never seen one in a wheelchair, or read of anyone with a handicap who qualified for the program. The Olsons, being the kind of people who believe everyone should be given equal opportunities, promptly did something about it. Bob, a Lions Club member of 26 years, called Vern Gogna of Stockton, the Lions Youth Exchange area chairman, who is in charge of the summer exchange program, to inquire why handicapped students were not included in the program. A very surprised official replied that no one had ever specified they wanted such an individual. The Olsons emphatically responded that they did, and would he please find them one.

Following a phone call to a Lions Club official in Japan, the search was begun to find a disabled person interested in becoming an exchange student. His investigation led him to the college where Maki is a student. There he talked to a family social worker who consulted with the instructors. It was her English teacher who suggested Maki's name.

On receiving the information about Maki, the Olsons first felt she didn't have enough of a handicap and urged the chairman to locate someone with a more severe disability. By this time, however, the paperwork was begun, and the selection finalized. Now, the Olsons are delighted to have Maki as their guest, and are learning to view the world from a totally-new perspective. Because of Maki, they were privileged to meet a short person from Mariposa and to hear her speak at a Lions Club ladies night function.

Both Maki and Akiho, a summer exchange student who is a guest of Buichi and Martha Kajiwara of Livingston, also shared some information about their families and their impressions of the United States.

The Olsons are also in the process of making arrangements to

(See •MAKI Page 6)

Saying 'hello'

Maki Agata, r, left for her home in Japan last week. She had been visiting at the home of Bob and Shirley Olson as part of a program sponsored by the Lions Club. During her visit to Livingston, she met a number of people, including the Reverend Steve Herzberg, who stopped by the Olsons' to say 'hello' while jogging.

Photo by Michael McGuire

THE CHRONICLE
Wednesday August 27, 1986

• Maki learning as much about America as she can

(From Page 1)

visit a short couple in Southern California who have learned to live successfully in a tall world. This couple has geared their entire house to fit their size.

Maki, who speaks English with the help of her Japanese-English dictionary, is the first of her family to visit America, an honor her parents regard highly. Her parents are Shihoko, a homemaker, and Shinji, an office worker at nomura Security Company in Tokyo. The Olsons are making sure she learns as much about this country as they can. There have been trips to various nearby towns, to the local community college, and to Santa Barbara where the Olsons' daughter Susie and husband Dave Swanson and their four children are also entertaining a Japanese exchange student. The Swansons say that they have now had inquiries from several friends as to how they can become involved in the summer exchange program.

Maki has kind words to say about her new friends. She feels that Americans show less prejudice to disabled people, and are more accepting to those different than themselves. In this country, unless the disability is unduly severe, these students are included in the mainstream of the educational system, often attending regular classes, and sometimes attending special classes designed to meet their special needs. In Japan, she says, most handicapped youngsters attend special schools which include mentally handicapped as well as physical. She feels it is easier to view your disability objectively when you can be part of the regular school system.

While she now functions as a regular student, Maki recalls her earlier years when life was more difficult. At age six, instead of entering school, she entered the hospital for a trying year of numerous surgeries to straighten her legs. She began her schooling in that facility, sharing classroom experiences with other physically disabled children. For most of her life, she attended regular schools and at age 18 she began her college studies at a university in Tokyo where she is a social welfare major.

This college, the Meiji Gakuin University, is one of the oldest Christian schools in Japan. Its official founding date is 1877. It obtained its name when Union Theological School and Union College, joint projects of the Presbyterian and Reformed Church Missions of the United States, united with a Japanese-English preparatory school and settled on the present campus site. It traces its lineage to Bible classes begun by Dr. Samuel R. Brown, a pioneer missionary who arrived in 1857.

The college has made accommodations for Maki's size by providing scaled-down furniture to make her comfortable. Friends help her in the cafeteria, however, because the trays are out of reach. Maki says there are only four other known people in Japan as short as she is. She refers to her disability as a "light" handicap, unlike others who have "hard" handicaps. An older sister, Maiko, is a law student in the Chuo University, also in Tokyo.

Maki's response to the question of how America is different than Japan was very definite: "It's so big," she said, "and the people are so friendly." As for Livingston, she said, "It has so many vineyards and so many kinds of trees." She notes that the roads are wider and straighter here, not narrow and curved as in Japan.

Maki looks forward to new experiences, such as learning to drive a car, which she hopes to do next spring. While it will take a special auto to meet her needs, driving is essential to fulfill her plans of doing social work. She would also like to live in her own apartment some day, but at the present, her parents enjoy having their daughters with them.

Maki is very aware of the needs of others who are disabled, and she is a member of a support group called the College Circle Club. This club includes those with various types of handicaps whose purpose is to reach out to others whose needs are different than their own. For example, Maki says there is a young person with cerebral palsy who lives by himself, and different members of the club care for him on a rotating basis. His need is greater than some, but the helping hands of others help him to live as normally as possible.

Maki returns to her native Fujisawa next week, a beautiful city about 35 miles south of Tokyo. This city, with a population of 360,000, is a resort area, with great beaches and a view of the famous Mt. Fuji. Only a small fishing village a couple of hundred years ago, it is now a bedroom community to Tokyo. It draws young people to its beaches for swimming and surfing just as our California beaches do.

The Olsons will soon be saying good-bye to Maki, but it is their sincere hope to participate in the summer exchange program. The entire family feels very positive about the experience and believe that other families would benefit as they have in their interaction with someone like Maki. The Olsons' younger daughter, Florie, has a slight disability that required her to maintain a regular exercise program similar to the one Maki follows. Maki has invited Florie to visit her in Japan, a possibility the Olsons had not previously considered.

For Maki, the fall semester begins on Sept. 9, and it will be back-to-school as usual. She will bring with her many memories of a small rural town in California and a warm family named Olson who wanted, not an ordinary guest, but someone special like Maki. And for both the Olsons and the Agatas, the world becomes smaller, and the human family closer. Patty, the Olsons' high school senior daughter, summed it up with her remark that "Maki is a delightful personality, and a lot of fun to be with."

Tue- Sept. 9'86
S.J. Mercury News

He's calling the shots

'Wizard' star has put much of himself into character

THE FALL SEASON

By Ron Miller
Mercury News Television Editor

INGLEWOOD

IT WAS a sweltering day at Hollywood Park, where they were filming a horse-racing story for CBS' new adventure series, "The Wizard," but star David Rappaport wasn't sweating it.

Why should he? All the rough stuff on horseback was being done by his stunt double, a diminutive

David Rosenthal reviews 'Wizard,' Page 4C

woman named Debbie Carrington, and all he had to do was ride around on the camera truck and pose for close-ups.

"She's a great double," said Rappaport. "She matches me pretty well, which takes a great weight off my mind."

It hasn't always worked out that way since Rappaport started landing featured roles in movies and TV shows. At 3-foot-11, he's not the easiest star in the world to double.

"When I've had doubles in the past, they've looked nothing like me," said Rappaport, who was relaxing in his trailer during a break in the shooting. "My double in 'The Bride' was 4-foot-6, had big buck teeth, a huge head and looked like an ox."

In that 1985 movie, a remake of "The Bride of Frankenstein" with Sting and Jennifer Beals, Rappaport played a dwarf who had to do a scene on a trapeze. When he finally met his stunt double, he learned the guy was a greengrocer who had never been anywhere near a trapeze in his life.

"In the end, they had to shoot around me for three weeks while I did a ridiculous course in trapeze," said Rappaport.

David Rappaport as genius toy maker Simon McKay.

Now that Rappaport has become the star of his own TV show — "The Wizard" premieres tonight at 8 on Chs. 5, 10 and 46 — he doesn't have to put up with that sort of thing. Not only does he have a proper double for the tougher physical stunts, but he also has script approval and considerable say over the way his character, Simon McKay, is being developed.

"The writers met with me for about two months before writing anything," he said. "They were try-

See RAPPAPORT, Page 4C

TV Review

'Wizard' doesn't work as prime-time series

By David N. Rosenthal
Mercury News Television Writer

THOSE TV guys, what'll they think of next? Is this crazy or what — a show called "The Wizard" and he's not from Oz or Westwood and he's not even named Don Herbert? Wow, what imagination.

Actually, he's from Saturday morning, or should be, and his name is Simon McKay. "The Wizard," the CBS show that kicks off the new TV season tonight at 8 (Chs. 5, 10, 46), belongs on Saturday morning. If he were on Saturdays, the Wiz could just dazzle the kids with his tricks, instead of getting bogged down with stuff like tired plots and hunky sidekicks.

But this is prime time and tired plots and hunks are *de rigueur* when you have a gimmick and nowhere to go with it.

The gimmick here is that little Simon McKay (David Rappaport) is a toy maker who lives on Elm Street (city unknown). McKay used to dabble in some government work, inventing things for the Pentagon, but got tired of it, so he disappeared for six years.

Now he's back, and to keep him safe and sound, the government has assigned perky Darcy Stafford (Cheryl McFadden) and beautiful but dim Alex Jagger (Doug Barr) to protect him.

We all know Simon doesn't need much protection; this pint-size James Bond seems much better at rescuing Darcy and Alex than vice versa. So what else is new?

Well, Simon does have some swell toys and tricks in tonight's opener, such as painting himself gold and rising out of a muddy river like a Munchkin god, but the rest of the show is pretty dopey, filled with gooey, ungrammatical aphorisms — "You don't measure a person by their height; it's the size of their heart that really matters" — in case we miss the point.

There's a kid whose dying wish is to meet the wizard, only he may not die if the wizard can find his brother for a bone marrow transplant. But the brother is on an archaeological dig somewhere in South America.

Can the wizard find him? He wouldn't be much of a wizard if he couldn't, now would he?

Ho-hum. If this were a half-hour show instead of an hour and on Saturday morning instead of Tuesday night, it might be an amusing diversion for the kiddies. As it is, it's 10 minutes of fun stretched to six times that length to make it into an action-adventure show suitable for adults, with predictable results.

This Wizard needs to invent a new show and fast. Otherwise, he'll be strolling down that Yellow Brick Road of Cancellation before he knows it.

Cover Story

Rappaport hopes to show his range

RAPPAPORT, from Page 1C

ing to pick up some of my character traits and find out what things I liked doing, so they could write them into the character of Simon McKay."

Rappaport estimates that McKay, a genius toy maker who solves "special problems" for a secret government agency, is about 60 percent him and only 40 percent fiction.

"For example, when Simon has a problem he needs to solve, he goes into his study and plays his drums," said Rappaport. "That's exactly what I do. If I don't drum, I feel bad. But when I do, it releases lots of energy."

Like McKay, the London-born Rappaport also is a gourmet, an experienced traveler and something of a bon vivant. ("I do enjoy eating well and I know what to order in any bar in most European countries.") Not surprisingly, they also share a rather raucous sense of humor.

> 'It would be so easy to just play off the small size, which I would hate to do.'
>
> — *David Rappaport*

"Humor, always slightly satirical, is a big thing with me," said Rappaport. "That's going to come out in Simon, who always looks at things from a slightly different angle."

Of course, that angle also is considerably lower than that of the average adventure hero — at least 2 feet lower.

Rappaport is mindful of the fact that he's making TV history with "The Wizard." He's the first "small person" ever to play the lead in an action show. But he's determined not to let that "gimmick" run the show.

"That's why I wanted quite a bit of say over the script," he said. "I wanted to make sure they did a show with integrity. It would be so easy to just play off the small size, which I would hate to do."

said was, 'Good sense of humor,' and nothing about my woodworking."

Rappaport first began entertaining people in the early 1970s while studying psychology at Bristol University. He played drums in jazz and rock groups on campus, performed in revues and did some stage directing.

Later, he tried teaching and might still be doing it if his part-time acting work hadn't begun to pick up steam after he appeared in the science fiction play "Illuminatus" in Liverpool and at London's National Theater.

"I taught 8- and 9-year-olds," he recalled. "I found that kids come to school with lots of ideas and originality, but too many teachers try to box them up and make them 'manageable.' I think school has a lot to answer for."

Rappaport discovered a rapport with youngsters — "I learned I could switch from being a kid to being a teacher and back again" — that CBS feels will lure them to "The Wizard" and away from the competing hit ABC comedies, "Who's the Boss?" and "Growing Pains."

He hopes his show will drag in a large adult audience, too, of course, the way his British kid show, "Jigsaw," did on English television a few years back. "That show was meant for kids, but when they did the audience breakdown they found it was 70 percent adults," he said.

Once Rappaport gave up teaching for acting, his greatest challenge was persuading producers to see him as something other than just another dwarf. Rappaport still remembers a film called "Black Jack." He flew into a rage when the assistant director yelled for "the dwarfs" to assemble for a scene.

"They were treating us like sheep," he said. "I told them I had a name and they could call me David if they wanted me. I've avoided working in groups like that as much as possible because no matter what you do, you tend to be lumped together."

Rappaport gradually was able to build up a respectable body of work in the theater, including "Volpone" with John Gielgud and Paul Scofield, and with his one-man show, "Little Brother Is Watching You."

Finally, the showy movie roles began to come along, particularly the part of Randall in Terry Gilliam's "Time Bandits." "I've been very selective," he said. "It meant turning down jobs when I really needed work. But now it's paying off because I'm recognized for playing all kinds of parts."

Rappaport is settling into what he hopes will be a long stay in Hollywood. Divorced and the father of a son, he lives in a Los Angeles apartment but still maintains a home in England. He is developing a movie idea for filming next year.

Survival odds for "The Wizard" aren't rated high because of the stiff ABC competition, but Rappaport believes the show surely will encourage more producers to see him as an actor of considerable range.

"Anyone who casts me in a regular-sized role has to be a bit more creative," he admits. "Too many directors and producers prefer to go the steady, safe way."

Rappaport credits his parents with giving him a positive attitude about his size by always stressing what he could do, not what he couldn't do.

"They also sent me to regular school," he said. "There was a time when small people in England were sent to special schools for the handicapped. I wound up going to a very rough London school."

In school, Rappaport learned to laugh at the teasing, even when he felt like crying. In time, the teasing stopped and his schoolmates began to recognize him for the bright, witty person he had become.

"In school I was always humorous and cheeky," he said. "I remember the report card I had from my woodworking class. All it

Harriet - Don't remember if I sent you this or not. Besides my letter - and talk - I thought you might get a kick out of the poem - Joe

Sunday, October 19, 1986

The Sentinel's top letter writers speak out

By Mildred A. Williams

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

Take 150 of *The Orlando Sentinel's* top letter writers, then add government officials from throughout Central Florida. Focus on a lightning-rod issue — the November vote on allowing counties the option to permit casino gambling — and sprinkle in other controversies close to the hearts of opinionated readers.

Those ingredients sparked the *Sentinel's* eighth annual Letter Writers' Forum Wednesday night at the Radisson Hotel in downtown Orlando. The forum recognizes readers for contributing outstanding letters to the editor — the letters that are printed with a star. Also honored for their ability to turn a phrase while broaching subjects dear to their hearts were authors of My Word columns, which appear on this page most days.

The main event was a debate over Amendment 2, a measure on the Nov. 4 ballot that would give counties the option of holding a second vote on whether to permit hotels with more than 500 rooms to run casinos.

The casino question dominated the evening, but it was far from the only thing on the minds of guests.

Another label that invokes anger among a group of people is "midget," said Joseph White, a representative of Little People of America. Although he did not say the *Sentinel* used the word midget, he said it was important that the public know there is no such thing as a midget and that the correct term to describe little people is dwarf.

White

White said he wrote a letter to the editor objecting to a piece by syndicated columnist Mike Royko of the *Chicago Tribune* on the sport of dwarf tossing. White and other dwarfs also wrote to other newspaper editors across the country and prompted Royko to write a follow-up column stating that the sport would never come to the United States.

The Orlando man said the success of the campaign shows that dwarfs can be just as effective in getting their point across as any other group of people.

"Do not look down at us little people as objects or freaks," White said. "Our hopes and our goals are high and the only way we have to seek those goals is to keep looking up."

Stop the presses! Please

Star letter writer Randall Cadman of Eustis said he was inspired to write the following poem, "Stop the presses! Please," by newspapers other than *The Orlando Sentinel*, which he said do not adhere to the same ethical standards as the *Sentinel*.

I find I'm filled with irritation
By papers which dispense sensation
These shopping market scandal sheets
Are filled each week with doubtful feats
Plus jet-set rumors and half-baked views
To please the crowd with low IQs.

To wit: Top psychic warns the world will end
Is Boy George Michael's special friend?
Will Jackie O become a nun?
Liz Taylor gains another ton
Aspirin makes child psychotic killer
Bill Frederick's courting Phyllis Diller
Girl puts poison in daddy's beer
Husband cuts off spouse's ear
Princess Di is losing hair
Lassie and Bonzo have affair
J.F.K. is resurrected
Stalin's alive and just defected
A corpse sits up and sings at wake
Baby Shamu's a plastic fake
Big Foot seen in coed dorm
The Empress Lily lost in storm
Atlantis found in Biscayne Bay
Lose weight with seven meals a day
A girl of six gives birth to brood
Paula Hawkins poses nude
Youngster is raised by wild dog pack
Graham spends workday selling crack
Does Zsa Zsa hope to wed the pope?
You glance inside, the answer's "nope"

I can't control the scorn I feel
For those who think such "news" is real
These yellow rags I can't abide
So those I buy, I quickly hide

I was invited to speak for 5 minutes on 'Little People - Their Contribution To The Community.'An incident worth mentioning - About 25 local politicians were among the audience. I siezed the opportunity to quip: 'If I were running - in this election - for political office - my platform would be: I'M FOR THE LITTLE MAN!' The mayor came to my table, shook my hand and remarked:'We need people like you in office.'

To fill space on this page, I have included a humorous poem written - and delivered - by another top letter writer.

Little People of America: support for the short

By DAVID PERRY
Sun Staff

THE SUN
Lowell, Mass.

STYLE

Friday, October 3, 1986 4

LOWELL – Dwarf.

The word conjures up images of animated, ugly little people with high-pitched voices and magical powers. But dwarfism isn't quite so simple, according to Ginny Sargent of Lincoln Street, and neither are those of short stature who are members of the Little People of America.

Sargent is the fall regional coordinator of the Little People of America's regional meeting this weekend at the Lowell Hilton. The group convenes Friday night for an informal gathering, then meets to discuss business and listen to a guest speaker Saturday morning. A dinner-dance is set for Saturday evening.

The group, formed in 1957 by actor Billy Barty, has grown to include over 4,000 members nationwide (there are about 300 in the Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts region), and LPA serves as a support mechanism for the emotional aches and pains that come from being small in stature. Members are no taller than 4'10'.

Sargent, a collection specialist at Wang Credit Corp., suffers from achondroplasia, a birth defect. It is caused by an abnormal gene that is passed from parent to child and is the most common cause of dwarfism and one which affects one in 40,000 births. There are several reasons for dwarfism, including heredity, hormones and diet, but the biggest reason is bone disorders.

There is no cure for achondroplasia, so treatment has more to do with prevention of further trouble than taking care of the original problem. Sargent has also suffered since birth from arthritis in her hips, caused by the deterioration of the joints that came with achondroplasia.

Her husband, Christopher, is of normal height, 5'11." The couple plans to have children, despite a 50/50 chance that the child will be a dwarf. Ginny's grandfather and father had achondroplasia, and both of her brothers did, too. "People get very frightened when children are born with it and it's a surprise," she said. "But we know more what to expect.

"It takes a very special person to see beyond the problem," she said of her husband, whom she started dating in college after an introduction by a mutual friend. They have been married seven years.

The problem, most little people would probably tell you, isn't just the physical roadblocks they have to hurdle each day, it's the misunderstandings.

"We're very much of a support group," said Sargent. "Both parents and children who are small have a lot of problems, and it can really do a number on you alone. With the group, though, you realize you're not alone."

The cruelty and insensitivity of people who laugh and gawk at others' problems can be devastating, and it caused both of Sargent's dwarfed brothers to drop out of Peabody High School. Things were better at Chelmsford High School, she said, although she still felt left out of the mainstream.

"It's very hard to establish a place if you're different in high school," Sargent said. "People tend to put limitations on you before you put them on yourself."

Discrimination is another problem, she said, and there have been several cases where dwarfs have called to check on advertised job openings, been told the position was open, and found it suddenly filled when they arrived for an interview. The group is looking into the possibility of retaining a legal counsel to help with such matters, but finances are tight, Sargent said.

"I have learned to accept myself as I am, and I feel good about myself. Sometimes, little people have a harder time maturing. I became more aggressive as I got older. You just have to understand where a lot of the other people come from."

So while the word "midget" makes Sargent bristle a bit, "dwarf," a medical term, is acceptable. But she would probably prefer just to go by the n to of Little People of Ameri "Think Big."

Ginny and Christopher Sargent at their Lowell home (Sun photo by Robert Wallo

'Little People' meet

A regional meeting of "The Little People of America, Inc." was held at the Lowell Hilton over the weekend. Above, Al Staples of Somerville looks at wedding photographs of one of the "Little People" members with regional coordinator Ginny Sargent of Lowell. Right, Paul Gordon and his wife Joelle of North Providence take a turn on the dance floor. (Sun photos by Rose Marston)

Sun
Vol. 4 - No. 46 November 18, 1986

Thanks to sports car firm:

Dwarf stretches to new heights

THANKS TO an amazing new rack-and-pinion machine developed by an Italian sports car firm, a 16-year-old dwarf is growing to normal height by having his legs stretched.

Young Mark Emery of Manchester, England, will be seven inches taller than he ever thought possible when the process is complete.

Born with the dwarfism disease known as quandraplasia, doctors said he'd never grow taller than three feet.

But that was before he discovered Dr. John Sherrard and the Ferrari company's Fixator machine.

Now the thrilled teen turns a key strapped to his legs four times a day and watches them slowly grow.

"I can honestly say I've never been happier," Mark says. "For the first time in my life, I'm getting growing pains—and really enjoying them."

For Mark's mother, Jean, 41, it is a dream come true.

"When Mark was born, I was told he would be a dwarf all his life," she says. "The doctors said there was nothing I could do."

Extensions

For years, Jean and Mark searched for treatments. Mark was even fitted for artificial leg extensions, but they were unbearably painful and caused swelling and bleeding.

Then Mark saw a program on TV about Dr. Sherrard, and made an appointment to see him.

"He examined Mark's legs and said he was 100 percent sure he could add seven inches to both of them," Jean says.

During the five months Mark had to wait for a Fixator to become available, he conducted some fund-raising events and earned the nearly $3,500 necessary for the operation.

"Every time I turn the notch on the machine, I can feel my ligaments and muscles stretching," Mark says, beaming. "When that happens, I know the bones are growing, too."

For first time, he feels growing pains

• WITH HIS crutches for support, Mark enjoys a stroll in the garden with his pet dog, above, and with his new height, he can reach things that were previously beyond his grasp, shown at far left.

Dwarf Teen-Ager Has Surgery to Lengthen Legs

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—A sixth-grader suffering from dwarfism will be able to walk and ride a bicycle like other children after operations to lengthen his legs by eight inches, hospital officials said Wednesday.

The first stage of lengthening the legs of 13-year-old Juan Garcia "went extremely well," said Dr. Chad Price, a pediatric-orthopedic surgeon at Orlando Regional Medical Center.

Price and the Italian surgeon who perfected the technique, Dr. Renzi Brivio, operated on the teen-ager's left leg, cutting bones above and below the knee and placing adjustable metal clamps on the incisions, on the outside of the leg.

The clamps have three-inch screws that go into the bones. Each week, the screws will be turned, causing the bones to separate about one-half inch.

The screw-turning "is not painful at all since it goes into the bone. The surgeons have a lot of previous experience to base this on," hospital spokeswoman Martha Workman said.

Natural healing over the bones will produce a callous surface that causes the leg to lengthen as it forms, Price said.

Garcia will be on crutches but not hospitalized for eight months, the doctors said. His other leg will then be cut and clamped in the same fashion.

The operation, pioneered at the University of Verona, Italy, has been carried out on a few normal-sized American adults, but never on a dwarf in this country, Price said.

Garcia is 3 feet, 10 inches tall, almost a foot shorter than his fellow students at Teague Middle School in Altamonte Springs.

His mother, Carmen, said she was "so happy, I could cry, I could jump. . . . It's so wonderful."

March of Dimes
BIRTH DEFECTS FOUNDATION
1275 MAMARONECK AVE., WHITE PLAINS, NY 10605
Community Services Department
Genetic Series

Public Health Education Information Sheet

ACHONDROPLASIA

There are hundreds of reasons why thousands of little American children become permanently small adults. Many are short in stature because of family or ethnic background. Others have a wide variety of medical conditions, many of them genetic, that seriously limit overall growth, or growth of specific parts of the body, such as the limbs or the torso.

Some causes are known and can be treated; but most are still undergoing research, often funded by the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, in medical centers across the country. Until the 1960s, most defects that caused certain bones to be small in proportion to overall body growth were called achondroplasia, if the limbs were more markedly shortened than the torso. Or they were called Morquio disease if the torso was more affected. As of today, studies have defined more than 80 distinct birth defects that cause bones to grow disproportionately. The most common of these is called **achondroplasia.**

Achondroplasia affects about one child in every 25,000 to 40,000 births. It occurs in all races and in both sexes.

What is Achondroplasia?

Achondroplasia is a genetic disorder of bone growth that is evident at birth. It is one of the oldest recorded birth defects—it is shown in ancient Egyptian art. Although the name (from Greek, meaning "without cartilage formation") implies that an affected individual has no cartilage, that is an exaggeration. The cartilage layers (growth plates) near the ends of the individual's bones are present, but grow poorly.

How Does Anchondroplasia Affect a Child?

A child with achondroplasia has a relatively normal torso and short arms and legs. The upper arms and thighs are more shortened than the forearms and lower legs. Generally, the head is large, the forehead is prominent, the nose is flat at the bridge (between the eyes). Teeth may be crowded and upper and lower teeth may be poorly aligned with each other.

A person with achondroplasia usually has a relatively straight upper back with a markedly curved lower spine (lordosis, or sway-back). The lower legs tend to be bowed, and feet are generally short, broad and flat. Hands are short with stubby fingers that may easily bend backward due to weakened joints. There is a separation between the middle and ring fingers (trident hand).

Because of the large head and short arms and legs, a baby with achondroplasia is slow to sit, stand, and walk alone. This sometimes causes people to think the child is mentally retarded, but most children with achondroplasia have normal intelligence.

Other complications include frequent middle ear infections in the first five or six years of life, probably due to faulty bone structure in that area. Low back and leg pains are common, partly because there is pressure on the spinal cord from a small spinal canal. This pressure on the spinal cord can also cause paralysis of the legs, requiring surgery to relieve the pressure.

Sudden death in infancy, especially during sleep, is not rare. The main cause may be compression of the spinal cord by the narrowed opening through which it descends from the skull, or by abnormalities of bones in the upper neck. Compression of the upper end of the cord can interfere with breathing.

Psychological problems may also arise, not only because of the difficulties in adjusting to a world geared to normal-sized people, but because child-sized adults are often treated by society as children.

What Causes Achondroplasia?

It is caused by an abnormal gene passed on from parent to child. In most cases (over 80 percent) the gene is a new mutation (has undergone a chemical change), and the parents are average-sized. Typically, they have no other children with achondroplasia, and the chances of their having a second affected child are very, very small. The reason for such a mutation is not yet known, nor is it possible to know which parent the mutant gene came from.

When a child inherits achondroplasia from a parent who also has the condition, the form of inheritance is called "autosomal dominant." This means that if one parent has the condition and the other is of normal size, with each pregnancy there is a 50 percent chance that the child will be affected. If both parents have achondroplasia, there is a 50 percent chance, with each pregnancy, that their child will inherit this condition, a 25 percent chance that the child will not have it, and a 25 percent chance that the child will inherit a "double dose" of the abnormal gene—one from each parent—and have severe skeletal abnormalities that are likely to cause early death of the infant.

A child who does not inherit the gene will be completely free of the condition, and cannot pass it on to his or her own child.

Is There a Test for Achondroplasia?

The condition has been diagnosed during pregnancy, using ultrasound, which reveals the skeletal abnormalities, but this is not completely reliable. Diagnosis at birth can be made by physical examination and measurements, but x-ray studies also may be needed.

Can Achondroplasia be Treated?

There is no specific treatment at this time. Treatment with injection of growth hormone does not substantially increase height, and there are no other known treatments that do. It is possible, however, to treat some of the problems that the condition may bring about.

If the bowleg deformity is severe, surgery can be helpful. Surgery also may be necessary to relieve nerve or spinal cord pressure from surrounding bones.

Another complication that may need treatment is childhood ear infections. Untreated, these can lead to major hearing loss. Dental problems caused by overcrowding of teeth

may require extra routine care and braces, and sometimes removal of one or more teeth.

Because of unusual body structure, pregnant women with the condition have to deliver their babies by cesarean section.

Can Achondroplasia be Prevented?

There is no way to prevent the majority of cases of achondroplasia, since these births result from totally unexpected gene mutations in unaffected parents. Genetic counseling can help affected adults make informed decisions about family planning.

What Research Relates to Achondroplasia?

Basic and clinical research funded by the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation lays groundwork for insight into the cause and prevention of achondroplasia. For example, investigators are studying the responsiveness of cartilage cells to a group of hormones important for skeletal growth. Others are exploring mutations of various genes in cells from patients with many of the different forms of short-limbed skeletal maldevelopment, as a basis for devising means of prenatal diagnosis and perhaps eventual attempts at gene therapy.

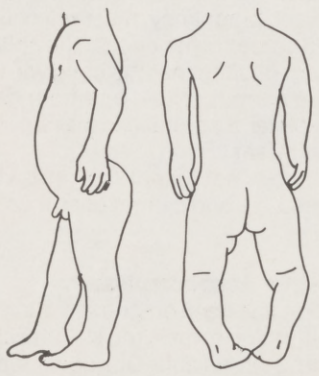
Researchers are also studying the cartilage growth plates of bones in this class of disorders, for clues to their causes.

Research also is concerned with treating problems caused by achondroplasia. A March of Dimes-supported investigator is working on a test to determine how vulnerable babies with achondroplasia and other conditions are to episodes of breathing failure which threaten their lives.

For further information on support groups for individuals with achondroplasia or other forms of growth deficiency and skeletal maldevelopment, contact LITTLE PEOPLE OF AMERICA (LPA), P.O. Box 633, San Bruno, California 94066; and the HUMAN GROWTH FOUNDATION, P.O. Box 20253, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55420; or your local March of Dimes chapter.

Depressed nasal bridge, prominent forehead and lower jaw

Short hand with trident fingers



Curvature of lower spine, short arms, short and bowed legs

Wide head

Excess skin folds about thighs

For additional copies contact your local March of Dimes chapter.

March of Dimes
BIRTH DEFECTS FOUNDATION

5/85

This information sheet is made possible through contributions to the March of Dimes.

9-0321

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON HUMAN ACHONDROPLASIA

19 - 21 NOVEMBER, 1986
ROME, ITALY

This meeting reviewed the medical problems and complications which can be seen in achondroplasia. It was pointed out initially that most individuals with achondroplasia are fit and able and live healthy lives. However, there are a number of specific complciations which are recognized, many of which are avoidable. Data from the Italian Birth Registry suggests that achondroplasia occurs in approximately 1 in 27,000 births. This would mean that 1 to 2 children with achondroplasia are born in British Columbia each year. Of all individuals with achondroplasia, approximately 2% die in childhood from sudden unexpected death, compression of the spinal cord in the neck, or severe respiratory complications. There are a large number of other problems which can be seen in achondroplasia but most of these problems are not life threatening. For instance, ear infections are very frequent in young children with achondroplasia. Many babies with achondroplasia are noted to have a bump in the lower back. It appears to be extremely important that babies with achondroplasia sit in infant seats or car seats rather than being encouraged to sit too early before they have strength in their backs. Sitting before there is strength in the back may lead to a permanent area of damage to the vertebrae and protrusion of the back. Many children with achondroplasia have very lax joints, increased lumbar lordosis, limitation of elbow extension and bowing of their legs. The most severe complication is that of spinal stenosis or pinched spinal cord. This is common in achondroplasia because there is less room for the spinal cord than in average size people. About 10% of adults with achondroplasia develop some pinching of the spinal cord which needs to be treated surgically.

There have been marked improvements in the surgical procedures over the last 3 years which can be used for limb lengthening in individuals with achondroplasia (and possibly in other types of disproportionate short stature). The recent experience in Russia, in Spain, in France and in Italy were reviewed. The techniques represent a major advancement, however the rate of complication and long-term results are not known. A fracture is made in a long bone (osteotomy), then over a period of two to six months the bone is stretched. After this period of distraction or stretching, an equal period is required for the bone to grow hard and fix. In general, the procedure is first done on the lower legs and then on the upper legs. In addition, the Russian group are doing extension of the upper arm prior to the leg surgery to enable better use of crutches. The leg extension is not just to increase height but also straightens the leg and can be done in such a way as to decrease lumbar lordosis and improve the angle of the hip. In general, all four groups have obtained approximately 30 cm of increased length. The surgeries are not without complications. Nerve compression,stiff joints, wound infection and slightly irregular bones were seen, however the amount of leg lengthening was quite remarkable and may present a new therapy for individuals with disproportionate short stature. This type of therapy however, obviously requires a great deal of research to establish whether it is safe and the long-term results are positive. It also requires a highly trained team working together to produce positive results. At this time, there is no one in North America performing this type of surgery. It appears that the ideal time for such surgery is at 12 to 14 years of age however it has been performed on people even into their late 20's. This surgery was initially developed for individuals with asymmetric leg shortening but clearly will have applications in some chondrodystrophies.

Judith G. Hall, M.D.
JGH/das
November 26, 1986.

SUGGESTED READINGS

FOR CHILDREN

Barty, Lori., "My is Billy Barty," Jack and Jill, April, 1976, pp. 35-38.

Burchardt, Nellie, Surprise for Carlotta, Franklin Watts, 1971.

Hoff, Syd, Littlest Leaguer, E.P. Dutton, N.Y. 1981

Keith, Harold V., The Runt of Rogers School, J.B. Lippincott, Phil. 1971

Kerr, M.E. Little Little, Harper and Row, N.Y. 1981

Krasilvosky, Phyllis, Very Little Girl, Doubleday, N.Y. 1953

Krasilvosky, Very Little Boy, Doubleday, N.Y. 1962

Meddaugh, Susan, Too Short Fred, Houghton-Mifflin , N.Y. 1978

GROWTH AND GROWTH PROBLEMS

"Growing Up Short," Science News, February 11, 1984, pp. 92-94

Heilman, June, "Is Your Child Growing Normally? Family Circle Magazine, May 29, 1984, pp. 44, 46, 71-72.

Hormone Adds Inches, Hypopituitary Dwarf Children are Growing by Leaps and Bounds," Nursing Life, November, 1983.

Scott, Charles I., Jr., Medical and Social Adaptation in Dwarfing Conditions," Birth Defects: Original Article Series, 1971, Vol. XIII, pp.29-43.

Solving Big Problems for Little People," Journal of the American Medical Association, July 15, 1983, pp. 323-330.

HOW PARENTS MANAGE

Ablon, Joan, "The Parents' Auxiliary of Little People of America: A Self-Help Model of Social Support for Families of Short Statured Children", Prevention in Human Services., 1982, vol.1, no. 3, pp 31-46

DelCampo, R.L., Chase, T., and DelCampo, D.S. "Growth Disorders in Children: The Impact on the Family System," Family Relations, 1984, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 79-84.

Finley, B.S., Crouthamel, C.S., and Richman, P.A., "Psychosocial Intervention Programs for Children with Short Stature and Their Families," Social Work in Health Care, 1981, vol. 7, no.1 pp. 27-35.

PARENTAL REACTIONS

Featherstone, Helen, A Difference in the Family, Basic Books, N.Y., 1980.

Kushner, Harold, When Bad Things Happen to Good People, Schocken Books N.Y. 1981

McDonald, Eugene T. "Understanding Those Feelings," in Counseling Parents of the Ill and the Handicapped, Thomas Springfield, IL. 1971

Rogers, J.G., and Weiss, J.O., My Child is a Dwarf, Little People of America, Owatonna, MN, 1971

PSYCHOSOCIAL MANAGEMENT

Drash, Philip W., "Psychologic Counseling: Dwarfism, " in Endocrine and Genetic Diseases of Childhood, edited by Lytt Gardner, W.B. Saunders, Philadelphia, 1969, pp. 1014-1022.

Grew, R.S.1, Stabler, B.E., Williams, R.W., and Underwood, L.E., "Facilitating Patient Understanding in the Treatment of Growth Delay," Clinical Pediatrics, 1983, vol. 22, pp. 685-690.

Meyer-Bahlburg, H.F.L., "Psychosocial Management of Short Stature," in Clinical Guide to Child Psychiatry, edited by D. Shaffer, A.A. Ehrhardt, and L.L. Greenhill, MacMillan-Free Press, N.Y., 1985.

Money, John, "Dwarfism" Questions and Answers in Counseling," Rehabilitation Literature, 1976, vol. 28, no. 5, pp. 134-138.

SHORT STATURE

Ablon, Joan, Little People in America: The Social Dimensions of Dwarfism, Prager Publichers, N.Y. 1984.

Keyes, Ralph, The Height of Your Life, Warner Books, N.Y. , 1980

Kleinfield, S. "Our Smallest Minority," Reader's Digest January, 1976, pp. 151-166.

Phifer, Kate G., Growing Up Small: A Handbood for Short People, Paul S. Eriksson, Middlebury, VT. 1979.
Plumeridge, D., Good Things Come in Small Pachages: The Whys and How of Turner's Syndrome, University of Oregon Health Sciences Center, Portland, Or. 1976.
Weiss, Joan O., Social Development of Dwarfs," in Proceedings of a Conference on Genetic Disorders: Social Service Intervention, edited by W.T. Hall and C.L. Young, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh, 1977 pp.56-61.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Little People of America, P.O. Box 633, San Bruno, CA. 94066
Ablon, Joan, "Dwarfism and Social Identity: Self-Help Group Participation," Social Science and Medicine., vol. 15B. 1981, pp.25-30.
Borman, Leonard D., Borck, Leslie E., Hess, Robert, and Pasquale, Frank, Helping People to Help Themselves: Self Help and Prevention, Haworth Press, N.Y. 1982.
Learning Together: A Guide for Families with Genetic Disorders, Public Health Service, US Department of Health and Human Services, Rockville, MD. 1980.

1986

L.A. BREAKERS

The L.A. Breakers Basketball Team went to the 1986 National Convention to compete in the 2nd Annual Little People Basketball Tournament. As they came out, excited for their opening round game, the crowd was very impressed with the enthusiasm of the Breakers as well as the originality and design of the uniforms that were designed by Scott Danberg and Mike Gilden.

They won their first game against the New England Celtics 55-12. The Team had to then face the National Champions from last year,the Chicago Slamdunkers. The Breakers were again victorious 46-2[illegible] and were now in the championship game. The team they would face was somewhat familiar. The Home Team, Michigan Centimeters. Former LA Chapter members, Chris Romana and Stacy Pouliot are members of the team.

The game was not decided until the last 15 seconds of the final quarter, where the Michigan Centimeters upset our favored L.A. Breakers 30-29.

The Medal results were:
1 Michigan Centimeters Gold Medal
2 L. A. Breakers Silver Medal
3 Lansing Great Lakers Bronze Medal

The Breakers proudly accepted their Silver Medals and won the admiration and respect of all in attendance.

The Team is looking forward to the Tournament in Philadelphia at the 1987 Convention and also the L.P. Olympics in San Francisco next August.

The Team Says: "WE'LL BE BACK!"

CHRISTMAS BANQUET, SATURDAY DECEMBER 6, CHALON MART....

OUR LOS ANGELES BREAKERS BASKETBALL TEAM AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION IN DEARBORN. L TO R, 1ST ROW: TONY COX, DEBORAH SECOR, PAM GRIZZ...2ND ROW: DAVE MYERS, JOE GRIFFO, TRACEY MC COY, MIKE GILDEN; 3RD, KEVIN THOMPSON, ERIC HESLINGTON, SCOTT DANBERG...10 CHEERS FOR 10 GREAT PLAYERS...

Photos by Chuck Secor

DANIEL MARGULIES, FROM SAN FRANCISCO BAY CHAPTER, RECEIVING PRESIDENTIAL GAVEL FROM ROBERT VAN ETTEN, OUTGOING LPA, INC. PRESIDENT. CONGRATULATIONS, DANIEL!

THE HOME TEAM, MICHIGAN CENTIMETERS. OUR L.A. BREAKERS PLAYED A GREAT GAME WITH THIS TEAM, LOOSING BY ONE POINT! (30-29) WE STILL LOVE YOU, L.A. BREAKERS!

The L.A. Breakers Basketball Team went to the 1986 National Convention to compete in the 2nd Annual Little People Basketball Tournament. As they came out, excited for their opening round game, the crowd was very impressed with the enthusiasm of the Breakers as well as the originality and design of the uniforms that were designed by Scott Danberg and Mike Gilden.

They won their first game against the New England Celtics 55-12. The Team had to then face the National Champions from last year,the Chicago Slamdunkers. The Breakers were again victorious 46-22 and were now in the championship game. The team they would face was somewhat familiar. The Home Team, Michigan Centimeters. Former LA Chapter members, Chris Romana and Stacy Pouliot are members of the team.

The game was not decided until the last 15 seconds of the final quarter, where the Michigan Centimeters upset our favored L.A. Breakers 30-29.

The Medal results were:
1 Michigan Centimeters Gold Medal
2 L. A. Breakers Silver Medal
3 Lansing Great Lakers Bronze Medal

The Breakers proudly accepted their Silver Medals and won the admiration and respect of all in attendance.

The Team is looking forward to the Tournament in Philadelphia at the 1987 Convention and also the L.P. Olympics in San Francisco next August.

The Team Says: "WE'LL BE BACK!"

CHRISTMAS BANQUET, SATURDAY DECEMBER 6, CHALON MART....

ATTENTION TEENS!

Hey Teens! My name is Dave Myers and I am Co-Teen Coordinator, along with Monique Hamilton, for the Los Angeles Chapter.

Most of you don't know who I am because I am fairly new to the Los Angeles area. I have only lived here about two years.

Monique and I want to have a lot of fun activities for our age group and we are asking you to drop us a line and give us some idea of what you would like to do. Are any of you planning on going to the Pool Party at the Boursee's on August 31st? If so I will be there and would be glad to get to know you.

I would like to hear some ideas from someone soon, so drop me a line at 5419 Hermitage #2 North Hollywood, California 91607 or give me a call (818) 508-0635.

LESLYE SNEIDER is on vacation, but we were able to pull from a number of resources in getting this newsletter together. Those assisting with articles etc., were CHUCK & DEBORAH SECOR, DEBBIE DIXON, LOUIS YANKOSKY, LYLE & GINNY MYERS, DAVID & MATTHEW, and MICHAEL GILDEN. GREAT!!!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM BUSINESS MEETINGS AT LPA CONVENTION, DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

1. One major change in the bylaws to the effect one Parent can vote if there is a person of short stature 17 or younger living in the same household. This applies to each level--Chapter, District & National.
2. The 1987 Convention will be in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
3. A total of 8 scholarships were given by the LPA Foundation, at a total of $5,000.
4. Two new chapters in Upstate New York were officially approved (District 2).
5. Two new Board Members were appointed to the LPA Foundation--Ronald Harris & Brian Morris, replacing Gerald Rasa and George Baehm III.
6. This year's royalty consisted of King & Queen, Teen King/Queen. Prince/Princess have been eliminated. The issue to eliminate Teen King/Queen is under debate.
7. New Officers: President, Daniel Margulies; Vice President, Harry McDonald; Membership Coordinator, Mary Carten; Treasurer, Tim Deathridge; Parent's Auxiliary, Frank Reckendorf; Newsletter Editor (LPA TODAY), Bob Spector.

Attending the Detroit Convention from the L.A. Chapter were: Debbie Dixon, Louise Yankofsky, Susie Barnes, Carole Morris, Patty Maloney, Lori Barty, Jody Tarabilda, Susan Zaribaf, David Brookfield, Larry Green, Chuck & Deborah Secor, Darcy Painter, Michael Gilden, Tony Cox, Scott Danberg, Eric Heslington, Joe Griffo, Pam Grizz, David Myers, Kevin Thompson, Tracy McCoy & Michael Gogin.

INTERNATIONAL DWARF GAMES @ DEARBORN
The following are the results of the 1986 International Dwarf Games at the National Convention, for the L.A. Chapter Athletes in Dearborn: SCOTT DANBERG: Gold, Power Lifting; Silver, Shotput; Silver, Javelin; Silver, 25 meter free-style swimming; Gold, 50 meter swimming. MICHAEL GILDEN: Bronze, weightlifting; ERIC HESLINGTON: Gold, Golf; TONY COX: Gold, Ping Pong; DAVID MYERS, Silver, Weight-lifting; JOE GRIFFO: Bronze in weight-lifting. SCOTT DANBERG won the most individual medals out of all the convention athletes. We're all proud of our athletes!!

Also of note: The West Men's Baseball team won for the 7th year in a row! The West Women's Baseball team lost by one point. Special thanks to KEVIN THOMPSON & PAM GRIZZ for coaching the team.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS: Joel Avrin, Paul Castle, Stevie Powers, Margaret Poppie, Steven Powers, Darcy Painter, Christine Dow, Ginny Myers, Marianne Becker, Richard Galhouse, Art Spuhler, Debbie Dixon, Susie Barnes, Lyle Myers, Anita Aguilar, Yvonne Gonzales, Laura Dashosh, Gary Hancock, Sr., Dolly Labasba, Shelley Etchinison, Collette Bernay, Beverly Harris, Christy McGinity, Charlotte McCoy, Dawn Knapp, Dan Ruzcika, Jr., Chad Dickson, Evan Artran, Karen Boland, Ed Gale, Ruth Spiering, Michelle Hamilton, Sousan Zaribaf, Damian Vera, Donald Berry, Tamara Ledoux, Denise Sotomayor.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS: Michael Silla, Marie Kontos, Dlawanna Stillwagon, Jonathon Simanton, John Leatherwood, Kim Hosterman, Susan Nordstrom, Marguerita Smith, Moe Nejad, Andrea Heslington, Danielle Harmon, Cindy Griffo, Billy Stewart, Mayer Asramian, Louise Yankofsky, Lisa Hayes, Connie Eisenbaum, Frank Poppie III, Judy Ruzcika, Bill Keffer, Mel Rossi, Patti Simpson, Diane Greeley, Jerry Cockrell, Michael Gilden, Gary Wilson, Louie Calzada, Ted Becker, Sandra Hauersley, Eric Miller, Robert Bell, Venna Browning, Kenneth Hauersley, Billie Welch, Tommy Madden, Tanya Bell, Mary Warren, Marilyn Crandall, Larry Green.

THE SEPTEMBER LOS ANGELES CHAPTER BOARD MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH AT PENNY FRISHMAN'S HOME. ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE BOARD MEETINGS. THE MEETING STARTS AT 2:00 P.M. SHARP.

THE OCTOBER CHAPTER BOARD MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5TH AT LOUISE YANKOFSKY'S HOME STARTING AT 2:00 P.M. SHARP.

The L.A. Breakers Basketball Team went to the 1986 National Convention to compete in the 2nd Annual Little People Basketball Tournament. As they came out, excited for their opening round game, the crowd was very impressed with the enthusiasm of the Breakers as well as the originality and design of the uniforms that were designed by Scott Danberg and Mike Gilden.

They won their first game against the New England Celtics 55-12. The Team had to then face the National Champions from last year,the Chicago Slamdunkers. The Breakers were again victorious 46-22 and were now in the championship game. The team they would face was somewhat familiar. The Home Team, Michigan Centimeters. Former LA Chapter members, Chris Romana and Stacy Pouliot are members of the team.

The game was not decided until the last 15 seconds of the final quarter, where the Michigan Centimeters upset our favored L.A. Breakers 30-29.

The Medal results were:
1 Michigan Centimeters Gold Medal
2 L. A. Breakers Silver Medal
3 Lansing Great Lakers Bronze Medal

The Breakers proudly accepted their Silver Medals and won the admiration and respect of all in attendance.

The Team is looking forward to the Tournament in Philadelphia at the 1987 Convention and also the L.P. Olympics in San Francisco next August.

The Team Says: "WE'LL BE BACK!"

CHRISTMAS BANQUET, SATURDAY DECEMBER 6, CHALON MART....

A MESSAGE FROM BILLY BARTY

Dear LA Chapter,

The 14th Annual Billy Barty Seven-Up T.W.A. Little People Celebrity Sports Classic is all set for Palm Springs. The dates are September 12, 13 & 14 at the Canyon Country Hotel and Palm Desert Golf Course.

The LA and Orange Blossom Chapter have always participated in this fun filled event. Through the sale of the enclosed raffle tickets, the Chapter and Little People can benefit tremendously. For each book sold the chapter will receive $6.25. As you can see, the prizes are tremendous. One Round Trip Ticket for two to London. an Amana Radar Oven, Paul's Creation Wardrobe for man or woman, Foot Joy Shoes and Matzie Golf Clubs - driver and chipper. Included is a Social Service Identification Card which will protect your sale.

We can all be a part of the Tournament by just selling one book. The sale of these tickets supports Little People and organizations involved with Little People. While there are many Little People who are well adjusted, there are families and Little People who need medical, psychological, education and social direction. We must promote Short Stature Clinics and Symposiums to the best of our ability. Dr. David L. Rimoin and Dr. Bob Wasserman have helped tremendously. Harbor U.C.L.A must be helped and now Cedars-Sinai is opening up a Short Stature Clinic.

We have much work to do and you can be of help. Please keep in touch and call us. (818) 980-4700 or the Los Angeles or Orange Blossom Chapter.

Sincerely,

Billy Barty

PERSONAL NOTICE: LPA member wishes to visit L.A.; needs place to stay 2-3 weeks. Will supply own transportation/food/incidental expenses. References. Contact C. Agoss, 2732 Laconia Ave., Bronx, NY 10469. Phone: 212-547-7218.

1984

TOO SHORT?
Auto Extensions for the person 3'0" to 4'8"

WANT TO DRIVE?
— Be Independent —

Easy to install. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Gas, Brake and Clutch extending from 4" to 18", $60 each. Guided by clear instructions, you will clamp them onto your existing car pedals. Fully transferable from one vehicle to another. The versatility of these devices will allow you to rent a car anywhere and to rely less on other forms of transportation. Great for Drivers Education!!

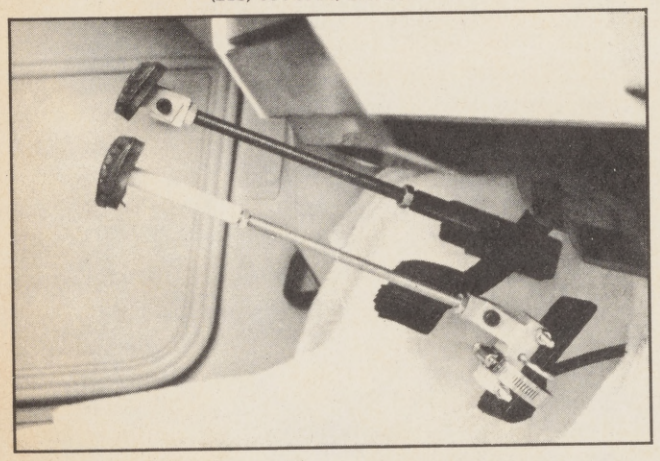
To order your extensions or request more information, please send in the form. Gas and brake pedal set cost $120.00. Gas, brake, and clutch set cost $180.00. Please add $6.00 for shipping and handling. California residents add 6½% sales tax. Satisfaction guaranteed. Please make check payable to Chuck Secor.

Name_____ Phone (___)_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

EASY RIDER PEDAL EXTENSIONS
Chuck Secor, P.O. Box 7677, Glendale, CA 91205
(213) 664-2914, Ext. 317



They are Great for Driver's Education!!

SANDY ETCHINISON, PAST PRESIDENT, LAC, & JOYCE COHEN WHO MOVED HERE FROM MINNESOTA. THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE, SANDY & WELCOME JOYCE!

...POTPOURRI...

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE DISTRICT HAS PUBLISHED A BROCHURE ON "The LPA Parents Group of District 12", and along with info about the group gives the latest listing of those in charge of the Parents Groups in the SFBAC, OBC, & LAC, also naming the Direct Director, and Adoption Committee? This brochure was re-printed with Dist. 2's permission... PEGGY (YTURRALDE) HAMILTON's friend told her that there was a framed picture of a large group of little people (mostly little men) for sale in a local antique shop. PEGGY rushed down to see it, and bought it. It was shown at the BROWN'S (1985), & we could identify one person--ANGELO ROSSITTO. One of our members spoke to him about it. It took him only a few minutes to recall what it was all about--the group had gathered in 1927 (Culver City & same hotel where they stayed for WIZARD OF OZ) for filming of MAD MAX BEYOND THUNDERDOME with TINA TURNER and MEL GIBSON.

WE CAN'T NAME THEM BUT <u>THE SHADES ARE OUT IN FULL FORCE WITH THE JUNIOR MIAMI VICE</u> AT THE TALENT SHOW IN DEARBORN! THE TALENT SHOWS AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS ARE GREAT--A LOT OF ORIGINALITY & TREMENDOUS TALENT!

Dec. 10, 1986

Dearest Harriet and Al

Just wanted to say a special hello and tell you again how very much we enjoyed the Get together in San Jose.

It was one of those times when it was so great it just ended too soon! That Sunday we did go out to the ball game at the park. Jaime was chosen to play on one of the teams and watching him running around radiating such absolute joy was really perfect. Then the ball game was over and it was time to go. Jaime just wasn't up to saying good bye to anyone. He sat on the ground and took his tennis shoes off and fiddled with his socks so no one saw his face or the tears that were just pouring out of his eyes. He fiddled around taking such a long time that finally Richard and Javier was saying "Come on Jaime, what's the holdup and etc" Finally Jaime said "Does anyone realize it will be another year before I ever see anyone like me?"

By then I'm sitting on the ground crying with Jaime and really driving dad & brother Crazy!

Sometimes no matter what we do its

just not enough! Jaime really misses
being with people his size.
We had hoped to be able to go to
the pot luck at Santa Clara on the
22nd of Nov.
We did take a day off and drive over
to San Rafael for the auditions of the
movie Willow. Jaime did enjoy that.
Our little town of Live Oak is just
wild with joy because Jaime made it
to the audition!
Well enough, I never seem to know
when to put the pen down. We are
all in good health and hope this finds
you the same. Hope you are
enjoying your new VCR!
Take Care
Love
Linda & fam.

Fegonis, John, Shirley, Chris
Adonas, Rick, Lorraine, Brandy
Bergwardts, Jerm, Joan, Tonia
Pamas, Linda, Richard, Jamie
O'Rourke's, Maurita & Michele
Margaret & Jim Vanderway
Dinner's, Elliott, Jackie & Nicole
Robert & Jackie East
Delardin's, Bob, Sally & Eli
Here's, Billy, Joanne & Rebecca
Nino & MaryJane Carlino
Poret's, Mike, Karen & Jennifer
Vance's, Tom, Barbara & Daniel
Welch's, Tom, Ann & Jon
Garcia's, Jose, Jane & Sarah Jane
Wood's, Jerry, Debbie & Kyle
Lynch's, Clark, Jeanne & Eric
Frank's, Alex, Frances & Amanda
Mc Gregor's, Marlene, Carl & Bonnie & Rob Ray
Gary, Karen & Tara Mills
Craig & Linda McCulloh
Don & Mary Hughes
Marlene & Nicole Bell
Peasley's, Bob, Rosie & Ericka
Evan's, Bruce, Debbie & Mike
Pat & Richard La Russa
Maybugh, Steve, Pat & Stephanie
Shackmartons, Don, Teresa & Kimberely
Ilus's, Linda, Bob & Matt

Esmerelda Blue
Debra Vanderway
Rabbi Haines
Debbie Harris
Maurie Heald
Bill Fanta
Frank Lee
Mike Dito
Gordon Pearl
Ann Mc Guire
Don Jewett
Virginia Meyer
Bethany Jewett
Ron Guffre
Dave Aikens
Sue Hsu
Donna Hughes
Roy Chiurco
Daniel Margulies
Larry Savoca
Russell Woodland
Catherine Tennessen
Matt Roloff
Dawn Abby
Grace Lynch
Mary Kenning
Todel Shepard

November 22, 1986

You brighten
the lives of others
with your warm
and thoughtful way--
That's why
you're being thought about
with special thanks today.

~ Love from all of your friends ~

Fred & Marty Carrington
Robert and Reta Selva & Jim Aleich
Susan Gresham (Rendall) Shaen & Ty
Jim, Yvonne, Yvette Carrington
Ron-Vicki Davis

'86

Open after gift

November 22, 1986

Dear Al and Harriet,

You two have given much love to all of us. You have always been there when we needed you, you listened with patience, you guided us with tenderness, you pushed when pushing was needed. You have been a friend, counselor, teacher and example to us all. Although John and I had to have the ability, love and determination to raise Chris as well as we did – a lot of the direction, knowledge and confidence came from you. God gave us a special friend when he gave us you.

This party is for you – given with much love from all of us and I'm so glad we were able to pull it off. Rick Adona has been my best support. He did all the leg work for me checking on VCR's – he took me shopping. A more devoted friend then the Adona's would be hard to find.

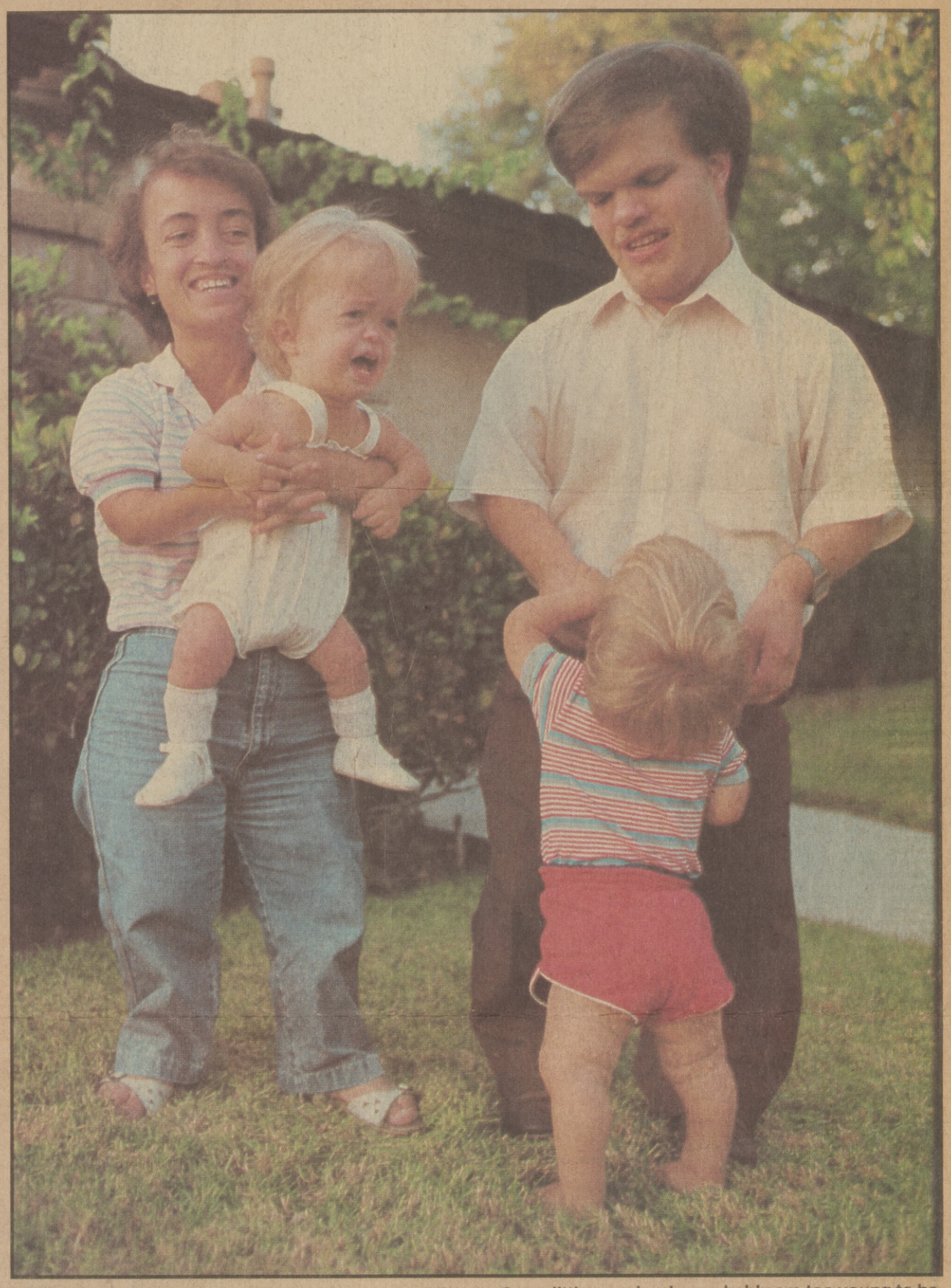
You are blessed with much love and I hope that today you can feel it surrounding you – – – –

Love

Shirley, Chris and John

John Blackmer/The Register

Betty Stewart opened an Orange County branch of the Billy Barty Foundation.



Mimi and David Becker's children, Sandy, 1½, and James, 2, are little people who probably are too young to be aware of it. Mimi says being a little person will help her empathize with them when they're older.

Coping with a big world

Orange County's little people are sick of low pay — or no job at all — and pats on the head

By Laura Saari
The Register

Shortly after her son Ronnie was born three years ago in Orange County, Vicki Davis, 34, got the word from her doctor.

"His limbs are short," the doctor said gingerly.

"I said, 'Well, he looks like a little dwarf,' " said Davis.

"You have a good eye," said the doctor. "He is."

Thirty years ago, in a small Ohio town, when David Becker came bursting into the world, he wasn't greeted with quite so much subtlety.

"You've got a damn dwarf," the physician told his parents.

Becker, who now lives in Buena Park, and Ronnie are little people — 4 feet, 10 inches and under, born with short limbs for any of 200 medical reasons. One person in about every 15,000 born is of small stature, according to Little People of America Inc., a non-profit support organization for little people.

They learn to get where they're going by boosting themselves up over store counters, driving with special metal extensions on the gas and brake pedals, and, for those who can afford it, remodeling their homes to bring cabinets within reach.

"We don't have a high-profile situation, like alcoholism or muscular dystrophy," said Billy Barty, a little person who has appeared in more than 200 movies. "Some people still think little people are cute, you pat them on the head and send them home . . . that all little people are happy and working in circuses."

Historically, their major employer was the circus, said Becker. Most of the little people today bristle at the word "midget."

Nowadays, many little people say, they're just not considered for any job.

"It was great over the phone," he said. "You tell them, I have this and this and this (skills). (They say) 'Sure, come on over.' But as soon as I walked through the door, it was a different story: 'How can a little person get this and do this?' "

Becker finally was hired by a large bank, he said, because a vice president had a son who was a little person.

"We have engineers, judges, computer operators, nurses . . . in general, we can do anything they're capable of doing," said Barty. "But the bigger world doesn't understand."

About 80 percent of the little people recently surveyed at a convention of Western States Little People of America Inc. said they have a college education, said Betty Stewart. Of those,

Please see LITTLE/J4

LITTLE: Low-profile problems

FROM J1

less than half are employed. Most of the employed little people in the survey reported that they earned less than $10,000 a year.

Stewart this year opened an Orange County branch of the Los Angeles-based Billy Barty Foundation. It is the first branch office in what Barty hopes will be a national effort to give hands-on help to little people. The foundation provides financial assistance and medical, social and educational counseling.

Stewart said little people are not legally considered disabled, so they are dependent on foundations such as hers for assistance.

"I had a little girl come to me, she had quit school at 17, and I sent her to the department of rehabilitation," said Stewart. "They wanted a doctor's certificate saying something was wrong with her. This girl is 3 feet 10 inches and they don't think she's handicapped."

While the Billy Barty organization lends local, direct assistance to little people in need, he organized the LPA in 1957 primarily to bring little people together. Stewart said LPA serves a more social purpose.

David Becker met his wife, Mimi, at an LPA convention. Being among hundreds of little people for the first time at an LPA convention can be surprising, said Mimi.

"You look at all the little people, and you say, 'My God . . . I walk like a penguin like that?' "

The Beckers have two little-people children — James, who will be 3 at the end of this month and Sandy, who will be 2 in September. Mimi said that in their case (both the Beckers have dominant genes for achondroplasia, a relatively common form of dwarfism), the couple had a 25 percent chance of having an average-size child, a 50 percent chance of having another little person, and a 25 percent chance of having what is called a double-double — a little person who gets a double dose of dwarfism and usually doesn't live more than a few weeks.

She said her children are still too young to be completely aware that they're little people. But Mimi thinks that being a little person help her empathize with them if they encounter discrimination.

"Being that I've lived through it, I know what to expect," she said. "I've learned how to handle the public awarneness of it. When the moment comes when they're being humiliated, I know I will remember my past days of going through it. I've gone through the experience and it will help me find the answer of what to do at the moment. But that doesn't mean the average person can't adjust just as well."

Vicki Davis, the average-size mother of an average-size daughter, Elizabeth, 6, and a little person, Ronnie, 3½, said her son is just starting to recognize that he is different from the other children at his preschool.

"One time he looked at our hamster," she said, "and he said, 'Mom, Juliana's small like me" . . . Another time he said, 'All my friends at school get to the toys before I do, mom.' I said, 'You just get in there. You're as old as they are, and as big as they are.' He said, 'But Mom, I'm not as big as they are.' "

Davis said she is not worried about how her son will get along in the world when he grows up. He is strong-willed and has an outgoing personality.

"He's already promised to the junior and senior proms to about three or four little girls," she said, smiling at Ronnie, who is taking a dip in the plastic pool in their suburban Cypress backyard.

But Betty Stewart, a little person (3 feet 10 inches) who has an average-size son and a little-person son, said her little-person son has encountered repeated discrimination.

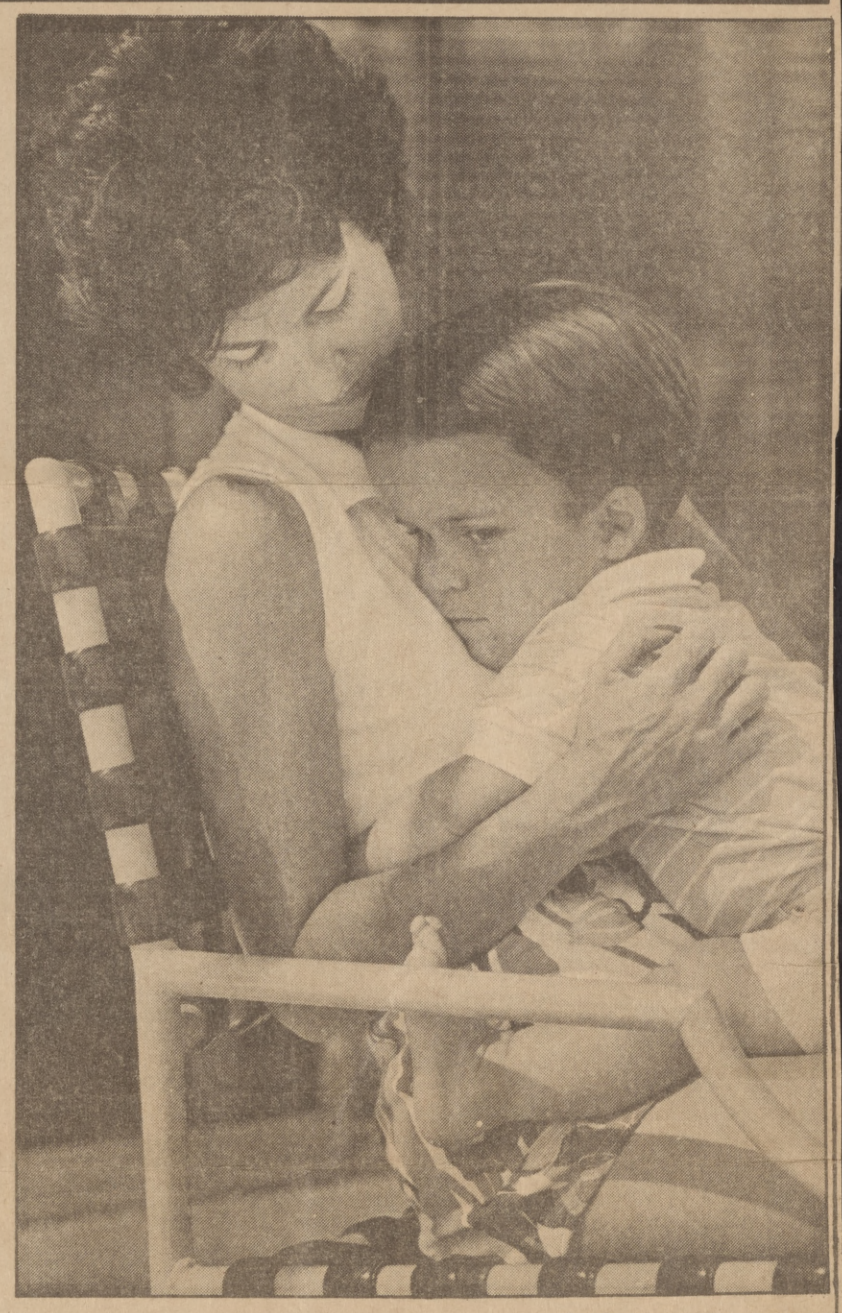
"At Esperanza High School (in Anaheim) . . . It blew their minds to have Billy enrolled there," she said. "That child went down to a failing student." Stewart said she had to battle to get the school to allow Billy to take driver's education.

When he was enrolled in the Placentia Unified School District, she said, the teachers told her that Billy could not have special transportation for field trips.

"They wanted a boy, 15, 16, to crawl up the bus steps in front of his school mates," she said. Stewart told Margaret Heckler, then secretary of Education, about her problem, and she said Heckler told her to fight the school board. Stewart did. And she won.

"There's a lot of crude people out there," said David Becker. "You'll find a child saying, 'Mommy, look at that fat little man. Instead of saying, 'Yes, he's a fat little man,' the parent will turn around and smack the kid.

"That kid is going to grow up thinking, 'I shouldn't look at them (little people).' "



Jim Mendenhall/The Register

When Ronnie Davis, 3½, complains that people are staring at him, his mother, Vicki, says, 'They're staring at you because you're cute.'

Davis said it's difficult sometimes for a mom to hide her anger at rude people from her children, but she tries to let them form their own opinions.

"If Ronnie says, 'Mom, they're staring at me,' I say, 'They're staring at you because you're cute," she said. "If it gets real crazy, I just pick him up and walk with him (in her arms), because people notice less. If there's one thing I could tell people, it's if you have any questions, stop me and ask me. Ask me, 'Is your child a dwarf?' . . . The main thing peole need to understand is that they're just people. They're everyday people. They're just short."

The group's next fundraiser, the 14th annual 7-Up Billy Barty Golf Classic, will take place Sept. 12-14 at the Canyon Hotel and Golf Resort in Palm Springs. For more information about the tournament or the local group, call 639-6208.

READER®
VOLUME 16, NO. 6 FEBRUARY 12, 1987 SAN DIEGO'S WEEKLY

LIFE IS LOOKING UP

The pride and the pain of little people

Judith Wilson

As Judith Wilson opens the front door of her Chula Vista home, a minuscule Yorkshire terrier barks and runs to her side. Next to Wilson, the terrier seems big as a Great Dane.

Wearing a girl's size-twelve Aran Isle sweater, maroon skirt, and child's size-one sandals, Wilson walks across the carpet and boosts herself into her husband's wing chair. The dog hops up and cuddles next to her. Blonde hair coifed in soft curls and her face virtually lineless, Wilson looks far younger than her fifty years. *(continued on page 10)*

By Judith Moore

Photographs by Robert Burroughs

"When you first meet another little person, you ask yourself, 'Do I look like that? Is that really what I look like?'"

LOOKING UP

(continued from page 1)

A Christchurch, New Zealand native who in childhood took elocution lessons, studied drama, and imitated the precise enunciations of BBC announcers, Wilson tells this story: "We were down by the river [in New Jersey]. Gary and Julie [Judith's husband and their twenty-year-old daughter] were in the water. I was dabbling my feet in the river and had my dress pulled up above my knees so I wouldn't get it wet. A little boy, about four, came up to me. He was just looking at me, staring, and the next thing I knew, he pulled down my dress. He was so worried about my legs showing! Then he said, 'You are *so* small. Don't you want to grow?' and I said, 'Oh, yes, I would *love* to grow.' He told me, 'Well, I know what you can do. Do you like cereal?' And I said, 'Oh, yes, I love cereal.' He says, 'Well, I tell you what I want you to do. I want you to go home and eat three big bowls of cereal. Then you go to bed, go to sleep, then slam-bam, you'll wake up and you'll be big.' I said, 'Oh, how wonderful. I'm just going to go home and do that right now.' 'It *will* work,' he said. 'If you say it will, and you believe that it will,' I answered, '*I* believe it will.' "

In her shoes, Wilson measures four feet, no inches. When she was two, her parents' physician diagnosed achondroplasia, an improper development of the bone cartilage, which causes congenital dwarfism. Achondroplasia occurs in approximately one out of 40,000 births and is caused by a genetic mutation that may continue as an inherited condition. It is found in males and females of all races. Typically, like Wilson, the achondroplastic dwarf has profoundly short legs and arms, blocky hands and feet, and a normal-size head and trunk.

"I've had many average-size people come up to me and say, 'I wish I were a little midget,' " says Vince Vella. A San Diego resident since he was two, Vella lives in one of a row of white cottages off El Cajon Boulevard in North Park. A model-ship collection, photographs, and paintings of the sea decorate his tidy living room. The dark-haired and mustachioed bachelor will not tell his age, allowing only that he is between forty and fifty.

In jeans and a plaid shirt, Vella sits at chair's edge, his boots planted firmly on the carpet. A vivacious man from whom words tumble rapidly, he recalls a day when he was six or seven, walking downtown. "I saw an achondroplastic woman and said to my mom, 'Look, look! Look at the little lady!' not knowing at the time I was going to be a little man. I just saw that little person, and she was kind of captivating. Later, of course, *I* grew up to be a small person myself."

Costumed in white chef's uniform and hat and driving the Giant Wienermobile, "the world's largest hot dog," four-foot, two-inch, seventy-five-pound Vella spent thirteen years working for Oscar Mayer Company. He was one of four "Little Oscars" who were billed as "the world's smallest chefs." He traveled 100,000 miles a year, across seventeen Western States, to Hawaii and the Caribbean and gave demonstrations of Oscar Mayer products at supermarkets, made appearances in children's hospitals and on television shows, in parades, and mall and supermarket openings. Nine years ago, Oscar Mayer discontinued its promotions, and Vella is now self-employed. "I do property management," he says, "a little of this and that, to make ends meet."

Vella is a pituitary dwarf, a midget. (The word "midget was coined in 1865 as a diminutive of "midge," meaning "gnat" or "fly.") "I'm a perfect miniature man," he says, and like most pituitary dwarfs, he appears to be, and is, a flawlessly formed adult, diminutive in size. His arms and legs are in the same scale to his trunk as are those of a normally proportioned male. "Medical people do not use the term 'midget.' They call us *all* dwarfs," he says.

It is underactivity of the growth-hormone-producing pituitary gland that makes the pituitary dwarf small. "Some male pituitaries have no beard and a high-pitched voice. [These are asexual ateliotics.] If I had not been given testosterone," says Vella, "I would not have developed as an adult male."

Because of improvements in the treatment of pituitary dwarfs, he continued, those under the age of forty have become rare. Most small people are achondroplastic. "In five to ten years," he says, not without sadness in his voice, "you won't hear of a pituitary dwarf."

Vella speaks of achondroplastic dwarfs as "achondros" and midgets, or pituitary dwarfs, as "pituitaries" and says a certain standoffishness had always existed between achondros and pituitaries. "And," he added, "Achondros don't tend to marry pituitary types."

More than a hundred types of dwarfism have been identified and clinically defined, most of them related to bone and skeletal disorders. Estimates of the number of dwarfs of all types in the United States vary from 20,000 to 100,000. But most people, unless they live in an urban area or travel widely, will not see more than two or three dwarfs.

To approximate Vince Vella's and Judith Wilson's spatial experience, I tried to recapture the world as it looks to us at six or seven. Life goes on several feet above you. Your eyes graze adults at thigh and belly. To talk with parents, teachers, and older children, you tip back your head. You reach, stand on tiptoe, and stretch your arms across what seem infinite distances.

(continued on page 12)

Examiner

Nicky Bell, in her South San Francisco bedroom, must raise $150,000 for a series of operations next year

Neighbors rally to fund surgery for girl, 12

By Stanton Samuelson
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

BRISBANE — A spunky 12-year-old girl who prefers to use her wheelchair as a walker instead of sitting in it has rallied residents to raise $29,000 for rare surgery that could let her walk again.

Nicky Bell's optimism is contagious, say friends and neighbors who are working to find the $150,000 needed for the series of operations next year at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

The first fund-raiser was a dinner-dance last Halloween held by the Brisbane Eagles Club, which held a similar event last Valentine's Day. The Daly City Moose Lodge, the Lions Club of Brisbane and a bowling alley also have sponsored events.

Nicky, who has a rare bone disease that afflicts only sufferers of dwarfism, is confident about the surgery. The affliction causes club feet, a twisted spine and arthritis, said Nicky's mother, Marlene.

"I think it's going to work, and I'll walk again," said the smiling fifth-grader, who goes to school in Brisbane but lives in South San Francisco.

"I feel helpless when I have to sit in the wheelchair, so I push it so I can walk," she said Tuesday.

She faces six operations — on her hips, knees, ankles and feet — that would hospitalize her for as long as four months. "It's a lot, but it's worth it," Nicky said.

While the amount collected is far short of what's needed, supporters are determined to get the rest before the scheduled surgery early next year.

Meanwhile, Nicky continues to rack up A's and B's on her report cards, to play trumpet in the band at Lipman Intermediate School, and to attend dances at which the boys dance on their knees while she sits in her wheelchair.

"She doesn't consider herself handicapped," said Marilyn Marino, Lipman principal. "Nicky is an excellent student and has lots of friends." Classmates

— See NICKY, back page

NICKY

— From A-1

raised $200 last November with their own fund-raiser, she added.

Bell said her daughter could enter a San Francisco hospital but noted that the doctor there with whom they have talked "has no track record doing her (Nicky's) unusual surgery. And if it's not a success, she could end up flat on her back."

"They want to use me as a guinea pig here," Nicky said, frowning.

Her mother said she had heard about Dr. Steven Kopits of Johns Hopkins Hospital through a friend who had read about him in a magazine.

"Dr. Kopits, who heads the only center in the world doing such work, has a high success rate, so he's the one we both want," Bell said firmly.

"They told me there was a three-year wait just to see him, but I was so persistent — calling every week for three months — that his secretary finally called and said, 'Come up whenever you can.'

"When Nicky saw the other kids at the center, we realized this was her last chance and hope to walk again. What she saw there keeps her going."

The operation must be done no later than January or February, just before Nicky's bones begin to reach their maximum growth, Bell said.

Bell said her daughter had walked until age 2, when experimental surgery at a San Francisco hospital failed and eventually forced her into a wheelchair.

The next fund-raiser will be a dinner-dance June 19 in Millbrae, which is being held by family friends.

Asked how she feels about all the volunteers raising money for her, Nicky said, "I think it's great how many people would do that.... There are a lot of nice people."

Contributions can be sent to the Nicky Bell Trust Account, Bank of America, P.O. Box 230, Brisbane, CA 94005.

LOOKING UP

(continued from page 10)

Someone has to get down the box of raisins from the pantry shelf. The sink rim hits you chin-level. When your father shaves, you watch him in the mirror but cannot see your own reflection. You scoot onto the sofa, hop up into your chair at the dinner table, and when you sit on chairs, your legs dangle or stick straight out. Stairs you take one at a time. Dropping a coin into a street-side pay phone is impossible. Supermarket top shelves might as well be Everest. To watch parades, you have to be lifted up. Crowds could trample you. Keeping up with your father's stride leaves you breathless.

In the United States, the average height for an adult woman is five feet, four inches; for a man, the average is five feet, nine inches. "The world is not geared for us at all," says Wilson, directing my attention to her living room where, to her, the couches and chairs must appear as plaid mountains.

Judith Wilson, Vince Vella

Married for almost twenty-five years to six-foot, two-inch Gary and mother to a twenty-year-old, five-foot, ten-inch daughter, Wilson has lived in this Chula Vista home for seven years. "Finding a chair that suits you, that's difficult," she says. "I generally sit over there." She points to the couch, where, across one cushion, a white towel had been spread. "Gary and I, he being so tall and I so short — most of the furniture I have bought has been to accommodate him. I really haven't adapted my home to my needs the way I should have done. I haven't thought about myself. But I think it's time I went out and looked for a chair for me or had one made."

Working about the house, Wilson uses ladders and footstools. "Several years ago, I was up on a six-foot ladder, cleaning Venetian blinds. I fell off, right into the bucket of water. Dirty water was strewn all across the carpet." That experience, she admits, intimidated her for quite a while.

The diamonds she loves glitter on stubby fingers she describes as "so small and chubby." Her hands lack strength, she says, and picking up certain things is almost impossible. She cannot sew. Cutting with scissors is a strenuous undertaking. Pushing a vacuum cleaner across the carpet wearies her. "A big saucepan of potatoes — to try to lift the pan, hold it, drain off the water, that's a difficulty. Gardening is a bear. I hate gardening, loathe it. It's like doing penance. After a while, my arms ache."

Wilson would like to have a home that fits her, and "one of these days," she says, "I might do it. But it is difficult when you have average-size people in your home. And if you want to sell a place, it becomes a problem. You have to have everything put up to scale again." But she remembers the time in New Jersey, when she visited the home of two small-size people. "When I walked into their kitchen, I just about flipped out. The sink, the oven, everything, was just at my height. They even had the toilet lowered and the bath sunk in so it was easy to get in. I was in my glory. I could have stayed there forever."

Wilson talks about the world beyond her house. "The most aggravating thing for me is to go to the bank and want to write a check. The counters are so high I can't reach them. I can't get to the Ready Teller machine unless I have a stool, and I'll be darned if I'm going to take a stool and stand out there in the dark of night and have someone hit me over the head while I'm trying to get my money out!"

She is leery of crowds, she says, because as a young woman, visiting Europe with her parents, she was once almost trampled. At movies, the symphony, or ballet, she stays in her seat until the other patrons have filed out. To see the stage or movie screen, she "bobs around."

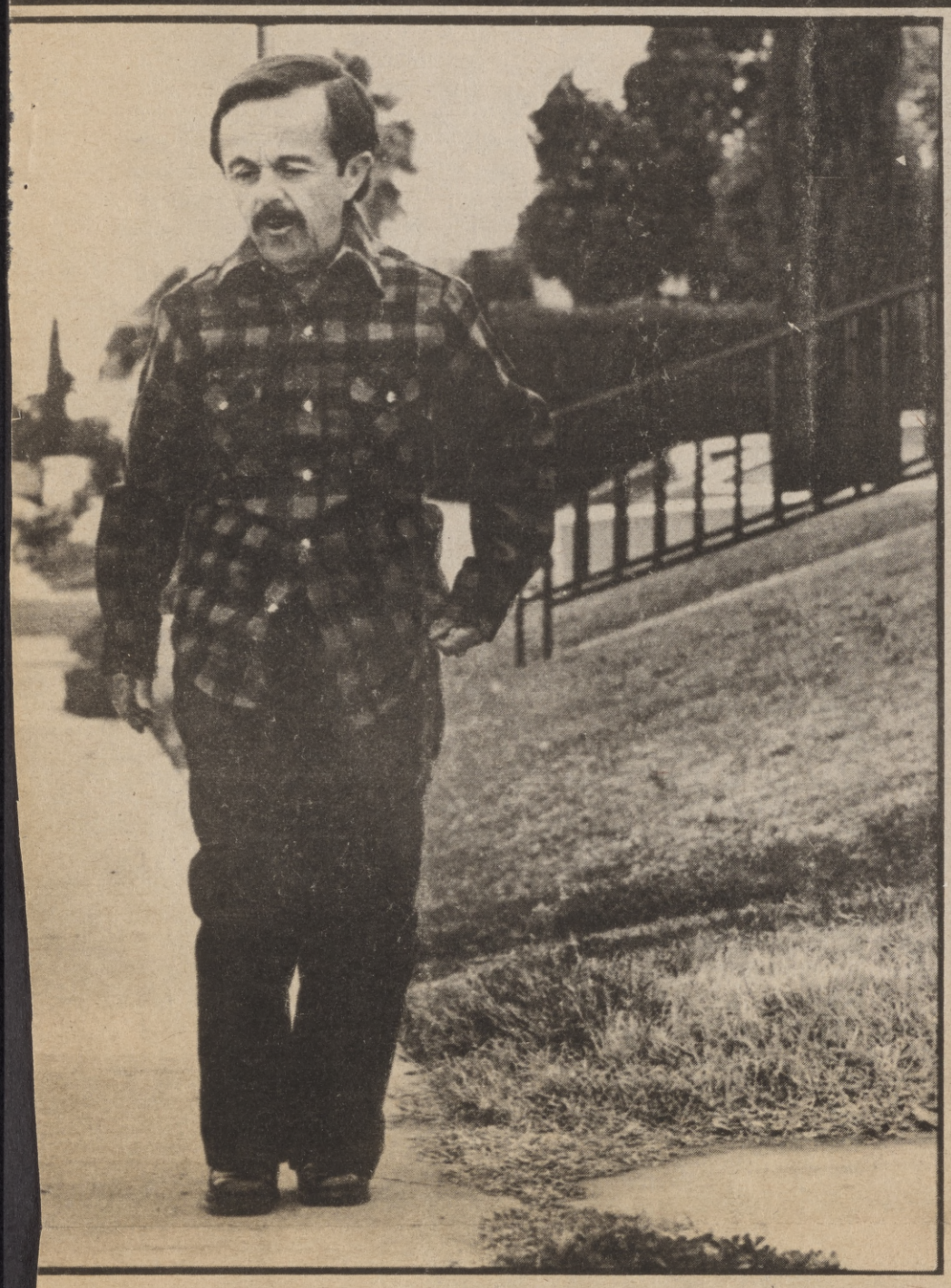
Finding clothes, particularly dressy garments, is a problem for Wilson. Her girls' size-twelve blouses and sweaters need the sleeves shortened and shoulders taken in. She has a dressmaker, and they shop together. When Wilson sees something she likes, the dressmaker sketches it. Then they choose material, the dressmaker draws a pattern, cuts out the fabric, and sews the garment. High heels have to be specially made.

Vince Vella has it easier. He usually dresses informally, buying size-ten boys' clothing off the rack. But he must travel to Tijuana to find shoes that fit.

Wilson was the second child of a certified public accountant and his wife, both of average size. Wilson's only other sibling, a sister, was eighteen years older than she and of normal size. "Looking back, I see it must have been very difficult for my parents to deal with the fact that I was going to be a little person. They didn't have support groups as we do today or psychologists to go to and discuss all these things."

Wilson's mother was a dancer, her aunt and cousins taught ballet, and she herself was two when she began to dance publicly. But doctors decided ballet might damage her bones, so her parents started her in elocution and acting lessons. She continued to perform. "That was one of the best things my father and mother did for me. If I had any intimidations, that certainly got them beaten out of me, having to be up on-stage in front of everybody."

When she started school at age five,



her uniform measured eighteen inches from shoulder seam to hem. The uniform was displayed in the window of a downtown Christchurch store. Wilson didn't mind the display, she says. Nor did her parents object. "My parents didn't feel ashamed that they should have a daughter like me. They treated me with such pride and joy, I think it rubbed off. Basically, my parents went on common sense. If I would come home crying because people were passing remarks about my being so short or children at school were cruel, my mother would say to me, 'You're just as good as anyone. You can get in there and do as well as anyone else.' My father was the same way."

Vince Vella describes himself as "born normal." At birth he outweighed and was longer than his older sister, who grew to be five feet, five inches tall. Not until he was two did his slow growth become apparent, when a San Diego pediatrician discovered a pituitary deficiency. At thirteen, when Vella measured just three feet, two inches, he began hormone treatment. Three times a week for four years, he was given testosterone and the extract from the pituitary gland of swine. By his seventeenth birthday, he had grown eleven inches.

About his parents, Vella says, "They put me out there, didn't shelter me." He attended Washington Grammar School, Roosevelt Junior High, San Diego High School, and for a year and a half, he enrolled at San Diego State. "I associated with average-size people, didn't have special privileges, special desks or chairs. I had problems, of course. Kids would tease me, push me around. But I just went out and found a few guys to back me up. Instead of being a follower, I became a leader. This pack of fellows, they took care of me."

Adolescence was difficult for both Wilson and Vella. "A wallflower," says Wilson about herself. "Your friends are dating, going to dances, and you feel left out in the cold on the sidelines." Vella became "a chubby little fellow." "When I was a teen-ager, guys might scream, 'Hey fat midget, fat midget.' You suffer the hurt, and then you go from there. You figure, 'This has gotta cease,' and you become stronger and stronger."

In his teen years, Vella found some advantages to his size. "Guys would pinch the girls on the rear and get a crack in the face. I'd come up, do the same thing, and girls would say, 'Oh, you cute little fellow.' My friends would ask me, 'Why didn't you get slapped?' and I'd tell them, 'Girls think this little guy is harmless.' "

When he was seventeen, Vella got a draft notice. "I went down there. They gave me a card. They put me down as *1-Y*, which meant I could be drafted or called only in a national emergency. So things went along fine and dandy for several years, and then one morning, I got a notice telling me to appear at the selective service board for a physical. I went down. All these big bruisers were standing around, and there I was, little short me, four feet tall, in line with 180-pounders. The sergeant called out, 'Mr. So-and-So, Mr. So-and-So,' and then he gets to my name, calls out, 'Mr. Vella, Mr. Vella.' He's looking around. I say, 'Hey, down here!' I could barely reach the counter. The sergeant said, 'What the hell are you doing here?' I said, 'I got this notice in the mail.' He said, 'Well, go on home.' "

Vella dated in high school and later. There were some problems, he says, adding, "But everybody gets their letdowns." He dated tall women and short women and almost married a tall woman. "Her parents were hesitant because of my size. They thought, 'Some dwarf, some gargoyle' and would say to her, 'What do you want that for? He's not for you.' They didn't want her to go out and associate with this little person. One day I decided I'd go over to the house and meet her parents. After that her mother said to her, 'Gee, why didn't you bring Vince over to the house before?' Once they get to know you, it's easier."

In New Zealand after Wilson graduated from high school, she auditioned for a position as announcer at a Christchurch radio station. They refused to hire her because of her short stature. "Who the heck sees you if you're a radio announcer? That was

the one time I really felt it, because that was something I really wanted to do. I felt very deflated." Eventually, she was hired as a radiologist transcriber at a Christchurch hospital.

She met Gary Wilson when she was twenty-seven. "I used to think, 'Oh, well, maybe one of these days.' Mother would tell me, 'The right person always comes into your life when the time is right.' And then Gary appeared." He proposed, and the couple were married in Japan where he was stationed with the navy. Wilson finds "disadvantages and advantages, being married to a tall man. At times my family forgets I'm of short stature, and they demand and expect a lot of me. I've mentioned this to Gary, and he says, 'I never *think* of you being short.' "

She knows other small people who, like herself, are married to average-size people, and small people wed small. Many small-statured people become parents. "A lot of them have the 'little littles,' as we call little people born to little people, as well as average-size babies." When she became pregnant —

(continued on page 14)

LOOKING UP

(continued from page 14)

years old, riding bicycles, called out, 'Hey, midget! Hey, midget!' and I yelled back, 'Say, you little bastard, you.' That set them off, and they kept on going. I wouldn't," Vella quickly adds, "go up and say that to a woman."

In the pre-Christian era, in Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and pre-Columbian cultures, dwarfs were esteemed for the mystical powers they were believed to possess. The ancient Egyptian gods Ptah and Bes were themselves dwarfs. From the time of the Hellenic Greeks through the Middle Ages, rulers, courtiers, and the wealthy collected undersize humans, employing them as jesters, acrobats, and protectors of jewels or precious objects (because of a dwarf's size, he could escape unnoticed with items entrusted to him). Catherine de Medici kept six dwarfs, and King Sigismund-Augustus of Poland had nine. In 1710 Czar Peter the Great assembled seventy midgets for the wedding of a court favorite.

Painters included dwarfs and midgets in their artworks: there is Van Dyke's portrait *Queen Henrietta Maria and her Dwarf Jeffery Hudson,* and Dürer, Mor, and Velásquez also used dwarfs, pituitary and achondroplastic, as subjects.

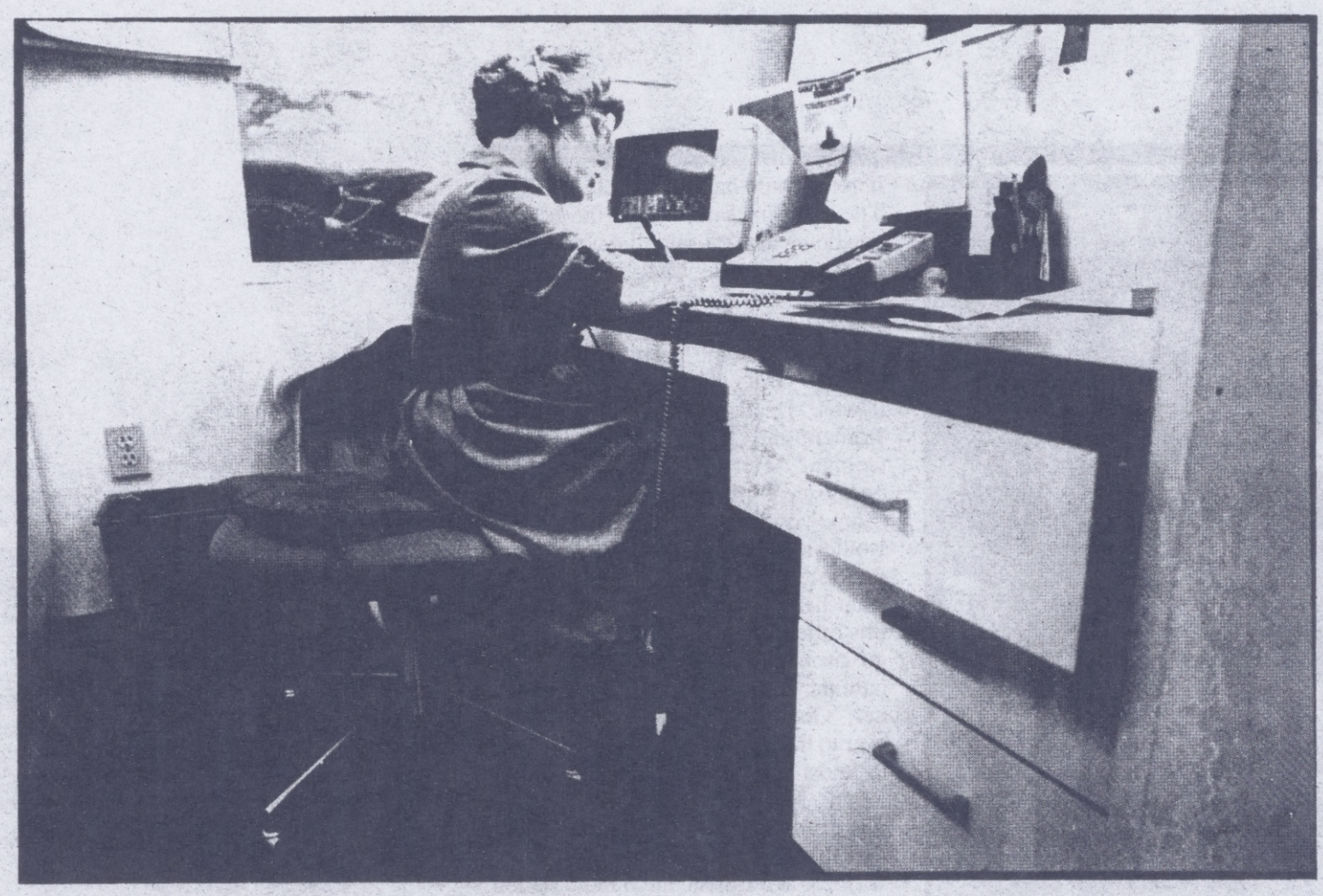
Until the Nineteenth Century, the undersized human being was classified as a *mirabilis hominum*, or human marvel. By the late Nineteenth Century, he had been reclassified as *mirabilis monsterum,* or monstrous marvel. While public zoos were being built, dwarfed humans were displayed in carnivals, sideshows, and vaudeville, and the most famous of them all, Tom Thumb, P.T. Barnum's world-famous midget, appeared before Queen Victoria.

In the last century especially, the dwarf has lost the mystical, mythical aspect of his identity. The discovery that dwarfism is caused by purely natural factors made him a "physical defective," at least in the eyes of a significant number of people. In Germany before the rise of the Third Reich, for example, troupes of performing dwarfs were popular attractions, but in accordance with Hitler's racial-purity laws, they were sent, along with Jews, homosexuals, and gypsies, to extermination in the Reich's gas chambers. Nazi physician Josef Mengele, with his reputation as a man with "the mania of a collector," accumulated dwarfs for his "experiments." (Mengele was described as "beside himself with joy" upon discovering a family of five dwarfs.)

Vince Vella can cite instances in the recent past in which parents of short-stature children had hidden those children. "Then the parents died, and the child was left to fend for himself." Although both he and Judith Wilson believe that acceptance of dwarfs has widened and that the range of occupations among the short-statured has increased, many healthy men and women under four feet, ten inches continue to have trouble finding employment that is commensurate with their education and experience. Wilson, who has worked for three years at Kaiser as a receptionist, did not have an easy time finding work and considers herself unusually fortunate.

Recently in Australia, dwarf-tossing has been sponsored as entertainment by bars. "Tossers" vie to see who can toss a dwarf farthest. After Chicago columnist Mike Royko uncritically

(continued on page 18)



LOOKING UP

(continued from page 13)

"an accident, but one that was meant to be" — she weighed seventy-five pounds. Six months into the pregnancy, she was down to fifty-five pounds, and the last four months of the pregnancy were spent in the hospital, in bed and fed intravenously. At birth, daughter Julie weighed six pounds, nine ounces and was eighteen inches long. "The doctors didn't know where I put her. They says my inside was the size of an eight-year-old child."

Her daughter, she says, had some difficulties when she first went to school. "The children used to say to her, 'Your mother is a midget. Your mother is a dwarf.' They were very cruel. She used to come home devastated, and then she went through a period when she became hostile. She would say to her dad, 'Why did you marry my mother? Why couldn't you have married a taller lady?' It used to upset me, but I thought, 'Now what am I going to do about this?' *Something* had to be done. I spoke to the principal at the school and said, 'I think the best way for me to deal with this situation is to be at school. The more I'm around the children, the more they get to know me, the better off it will be. Then they won't think I'm an oddity, that Julie's mother is a freak or a witch, as they think I am.' So I volunteered to tutor, and I worked at the library, and it wasn't very long, a couple of months, that children would come up and say, 'Oh, you're Julie's mom,' and a good rapport developed. Her friends eventually thought the world of me. We had children over here all the time. They'd be in the kitchen, on my stool. They thought it was wonderful that they could reach. They'd even do my dishes!"

Occasionally, an average-size person, equating smallness with youth, will treat the dwarf as if he or she were a child. A tendency exists, says Wilson, for people to say, " 'You're so cute.' I don't take umbrage at it. They mean well. Other people, though, try to mother you or may be slightly domineering." About the latter, she laughs, "That doesn't go over with me at all." People stare, too. Wilson says, "I don't let that bother me. You become used to it. Half the time, I don't notice. The time it's really noticeable is if a child stares and says something. Then, often, the mother feels embarrassed, and she either spanks the child or herself will make rude or loud remarks. That brings it more to my attention than if she simply let the child look at me.

"You have to think you are good and wonderful. You have to build that barrier around yourself, so that you don't allow yourself to be hurt. And it's not easy to build that barrier. But you get over the hurt after the years, or at least I have."

Rarely does Vella notice people making fun of him or pointing him out in an impolite manner. "Average-size adults are captivated by you, and children are curious." He has learned to employ a "little gimmick," he says, with children who stare. He speaks to them, right away. "I say, 'Hey, little fellow, aren't *you* cute.' "Of course, if they are nasty, I give them a couple of words and put them in their place. I have a mouth, and I have to open it." He lifts an eyebrow. "Kids are rougher now than they used to be. Not too long ago, I was crossing the street a couple of blocks from here, and a couple of little punks about thirteen, fourteen

(continued on page 16)

LOOKING UP

(continued from page 16)

mentioned Australian dwarf-tossing, a Chicago bar began to arrange a similar event.

It was Little People of America (LPA), a nonprofit organization for people who are small in stature, that stopped Chicago dwarf-tossing before it even began. LPA was organized in 1957 when television and movie personality Billy Barty, an achondroplastic who has appeared in segments of *The Love Boat, The Odd Couple,* and *Trapper John* and in Chevy Chase's film *Under the Rainbow*, gathered twenty-one dwarfs from nine states for a meeting in Reno, Nevada. Barty saw a need for "dwarf consciousness-raising" and advocacy. He and his group, which initially called itself "Midgets of America," amassed a list of possible members, and when a second convention was held in 1960, one hundred people attended. The group incorporated in 1961 as Little People of America, Inc., and it has been LPA, with its motto "Think Big," that has promoted the phrase "little people" as the preferred term for the short-statured. LPA has grown steadily, and at last year's annual convention, held in Detroit, 900 people were present.

The basic requirement for LPA membership is that one be under four feet, ten inches. LPA has approximately 4000 members in the United States, about half of whom are parents of dwarf children. Achondroplastic dwarfs constitute most of the membership. At least one-third more women than men belong to and are active in LPA, and although dwarfism does not discriminate among races or ethnic groups, LPA membership has remained principally Caucasian. LPA sponsors a parents' auxiliary for families who have a dwarf child or teen-ager to help them deal with the physical, social, and psychological problems that a dwarf child faces.

The week-long LPA convention is a major event, with daytime workshops and sports events and nightly fashion shows, talent competitions, and dances. An election of royalty is held, and a king and queen, teen king and teen queen, and prince and princess (under twelve) are named. Hong Kong tailors travel to the conventions to measure little people for clothing. Medical specialists offer free examinations and consultations and hold seminars for members. (LPA is credited with an increase in dwarfism research, and during convention week, clinicians interview and examine dwarf subjects for research projects.) Although members insist that LPA is not a "dwarfs' lonely-hearts club," many courtships begin at the conventions, and members who have married during the year model their wedding clothes at the fashion show.

"The convention is a microcosm of the world of big people, a miniature version of the larger world," says Vella, who adds, "People who see me, they think *I'm* so short. I go to some of these conventions and it about bowls me over! I see people there who must be twenty-four inches tall!"

Judith Wilson had known only one other little person in Christchurch, New Zealand, and it was not until 1969, when the navy transferred her husband to New Jersey, that she had any association with other people her own size. Julie was an infant. Wilson was having

(continued on page 20)

LOOKING UP

(continued from page 18)

severe health problems and was in the midst of a depression. The base chaplain suggested she get in touch with LPA. She says today, "It was a terrific shock to my system the very first time I went to an LPA convention in Atlantic City and saw 150 to 200 little people all there together. My husband was with me, and I was wishing that the whole building would open up and I'd just go through the floor and be swallowed.

"It really hit me hard, going to that first meeting. It took me a long time, psychologically, to adjust to being around people like myself. When you meet another little person, you ask yourself, 'Do I really look like that? Is that what I really look like?' I've heard other little people say they experienced similar feelings. I never look at myself as being a little person. You're so geared for the average-size world and looking up to people.

"Now that I'm more adjusted to being with other little people, I enjoy being around other them and comparing notes about how they do things and being able to look at other people at eye level without straining my neck — it becomes very tiring."

Today Wilson is president, and Vella is vice president of the San Diego branch of LPA. Forty-five names are on the chapter's mailing list. Of those, twenty are average-size parents with dwarf children. Only ten are adult little people. Wilson explains, "Unfortunately, it isn't a very active group. They don't seem to want to get together. We have potlucks and, during the summer, picnics at the beach, but we're very lucky if ten people come. Sometimes we'll have only three."

Statewide, there are four LPA chapters and a combined membership of 600, with the largest number in the Bay Area and in two Los Angeles chapters. Los Angeles has always attracted little people. Not only has the entertainment industry drawn them, but during World War II, many moved to the area to work in aircraft factories. In the last decade, young adult LPA members from the East Coast have moved to Los Angeles to afford themselves a wider range of small-stature contacts.

Wilson empathizes with small-statured people who do not wish to associate with LPA. "Some don't want to face the reality of being small. For the longest time, *I* was not able to accept it." So just to walk up and introduce herself to another little person on the street is problematic for her. Last Christmas she was at a shopping mall with an average-size friend. They saw another little person, and Wilson's friend urged her to go up and say hello.

"I didn't want to do it. But my friend insisted. I introduced myself as president of the San Diego LPA chapter and gave her my name. The woman said, 'I've heard about LPA. I'm not interested. I don't want you to bother me. Leave me alone.' My friend could not believe it! She was perfectly horrified!"

"Maybe it's me," she continues. "But I feel if a person doesn't want to be bothered.... I smile, and if there's something in the eyes, I approach. But if the person doesn't appear to want to approach me, it's better left unsaid."

In the Sixties when Vince Vella joined LPA, the San Diego chapter was thriving. Many of its members then were in their forties and fifties. "A fellow in LPA kept approaching me about going, and I kept putting it off, like many little people do. Finally, just to get the guy off my back, I went." Vella immediately became active, was chapter president for several years, and brought thirty or forty more little people into LPA.

Vella agreed with Wilson that invitations to LPA membership were not always welcomed by short-statured people. "It boils down to the fact that they don't want to accept the fact that they're small or different. But I have a lot of faith in my Creator who made me small," he says. "I have no idea what it would have been like to have been normal size, whatever normal might be. The only way that I can see a normal view is to climb on a chair and be five foot five, instead of four foot two. But I can say this and really mean it. I have no desire to be of normal size. It's been a real trip, being small."

And Judith Wilson offers, "My mum used to say to me, 'All the best things come in small packages, my dear.' " □

REGIONAL REPORT

The Oneonta Daily Star, Saturday, February 21, 1987.

Short in stature, not in achievement

Little People of America visit New Berlin school

By TOM GRACE
Tri-Towns Bureau

NEW BERLIN — Lots of little people gathered in the New Berlin Elementary School gymnasium Friday afternoon to meet two short folks who will never grow any taller — Bill Roberts, 27, and Patti Yoder, 22, both members of the Long Island Chapter of Little People of America.

Born with conditions which limited their physical growth, Roberts and Miss Yoder told 230 children in kindergarten through fourth grade that determined people of all sizes can overcome their shortcomings.

Roberts, who stands 4-foot-6, is employed as an auditor by an electronics firm in Hicksville. Miss Yoder, 4-foot-3, is a college student and part-time clerical worker. They said they've encountered obstacles on the job and off, but have surmounted most of them with patience, ingenuity, and occasionally, a little help from their friends.

Roberts and Miss Yoder were introduced to students by Sarah Whiteman, 7, and Evelyn Whiteman, 10, who have known Roberts for years. The girls' mother, Dottie Whiteman of New Berlin, led a question and answer session with students.

Students wanted to know how the two little people were able to perform tasks they'd seen taller adults do, such as driving a car.

Roberts said he drove with the aid of extension peddles. He was asked if he drove a big or little car, and said he drove a little one, strictly because he wouldn't want to own a larger model.

Miss Yoder, who is a pet lover, was asked if she owned a large or small dog and surprised students when she said she owned a German shepherd.

The purpose of the visit was to let the children meet people who are different from most of those they are likely to encounter, said school Principal Gerry Griffith, who stands 6-foot-5.

Roberts, president of Little People of America's Long Island Chapter, said he came to the school to show children that people with unusual appearances have the same feelings as others.

"When you meet a little person, just remember he's really no different from you," Roberts told the children.

At the end of the assembly, he and Miss Yoder gave out brochures which advised students how to deal with little people, including a request not to use terms such as midget or dwarf, which many little people feel are derogatory.

But students shouldn't feel afraid to walk up to little people and ask them sincere questions about their lives, said Roberts.

Roberts and Miss Yoder said they had gained much by belonging to Little People of America, a support group for people 4-foot-10 and under, but socialized with people of all sizes.

Though both are short, Roberts and Miss Yoder were affected by different genetic conditions. Roberts was born with a normal-sized torso and short limbs, while Miss Yoder's body is proportionately smaller than average.

Roberts said that one in about 10,000 children is born with a condition which limits growth.

Miss Yoder said her parents were unaware her physical development was unusual until she was about five, though other conditions are easily spotted at birth.

The two are guests of the Whiteman family of New Berlin while in the area and plan to go roller skating with the family this weekend, said Mrs. Whiteman.

Star photo by Bruce Endries

Patti Yoder, a member of Little People of America, shakes hands with New Berlin elementary students Friday as they leave an assembly in which she and fellow member Bill Roberts discussed adult life under the 5-foot mark.

The Philadelphia Inquirer
daily magazine
People • Home • Movies • The Arts • TV • Style

♦♦♦ Friday, July 31, 1987

SEEKING STATURE

"Little people" start a convention here today, searching for respect.

By Mike Capuzzo
Inquirer Staff Writer

The Adam's Mark Hotel dispatched carpenters to build little staircases at the foot of the registration desk this week, so the little people could climb three steps up to register.

Waiters have been told not to put salt and pepper shakers and sugar bowls in the middle of the tables, but closer to the edge, where the little people can reach them.

Maids, the little people hope, will not hang towels above the toilet (where they are out of reach), but instead leave them folded on the bathroom vanity.

The little people are coming to Philadelphia today to begin a national convention, and average-size people are scurrying to adjust.

They are dwarfs, and they call themselves little people, "because that's what we are, little people," said Harry F. McDonald, a Philadelphian and vice president of the Little People of America, the national support group that is marking its 30th anniversary with a nine-day convention in Philadelphia ending Aug. 8.

Short-stature symposiums will cover all aspects of living in an average world when you are 4-foot-10 or shorter. Seminar subjects include family planning, sexuality, the dwarf in art and literature, and mixed marriages (between little and average-size people).

Little people (who are often barred from school sports with the line, "We wouldn't want you to get hurt") will compete against one another this weekend at Villanova University in the LPA-Dwarf Athletic Association Philadelphia Invitational Games — a little people's Olympics.

They will play basketball and softball, throw the discus and javelin, swim and power-lift (some little people can bench-press 350 pounds) for gold, silver and bronze medals.

If there is a theme to the convention, McDonald said, it is the little person's search for respect and understanding in the average-size world.

"We're having our convention in Philadelphia on the 200th anniversary of the Constitution, and we want to claim the promise of the Constitution that no person will be denied the equal protection of the laws," McDonald, a mechanical engineer for the Army, said the other day.

In a society in which groups of every stripe protest in the streets, "we won't be out picketing and demanding our rights," McDonald added. "We don't do that. But we would like to get some public awareness."

Dwarfs have endured centuries of oppression.

McDonald compared it with the civil-rights movement: Blacks "were made slaves for 200 years," he said. "Well, we've been given away as gifts for 2,000 years."

European kings once kept dwarfs as good-luck charms and gave them as gifts. In recent years, bars in England and Australia have sponsored dwarf-tossing contests — patrons would see who could throw a helmeted dwarf the farthest. Then there was "dwarf bowling" in England and Australia: "They throw us down the lane strapped to a skateboard," McDonald said.

Little people in Chicago enlisted Mayor Harold Wash-

(See CONVENTION on 3-D)

The Philadelphia Inquirer / GREG LANIER

Harry F. McDonald with his son, Brendan, who, at 4-foot-½-inch, is almost as tall as his father.

Associated Press

Members of the group played softball during a 1985 convention in Boston.

Little people convene here in search of respect

CONVENTION, from 1-D

ington's support to stop dwarf-tossing in the Windy City two years ago.

"We are ridiculed and, in many cases, physically abused in high schools and grade schools as it is," McDonald said. "All we need is somebody throwing our kid in the schoolyard, thinking, 'If adults do it, why can't we?' "

The life of McDonald — an achondroplastic dwarf, born with an average-size torso and small arms and legs — illustrates how the estimated 80,000 little people in the United States work to lead so-called normal lives in an average-size world.

"Don't say I said *normal*," McDonald said, pointing out that little people prefer *average*. "I'm vice president, and I'll never get elected again. They'll hang me."

McDonald, who lives in Northeast Philadelphia, was born 41 years ago in Mayfair, the third child of an Irish father and German mother. (Most dwarfs are born with some type of bone dysplasia, or disordered growth, the most common being achondroplasia. Unlike midgets, who are of short stature but normal proportions, dwarfs develop with some disproportions.) McDonald's brother and sister were both average-size.

McDonald grew to his tallest — 4-foot-6 — when he was 21, but has shrunk four inches since, because of spinal problems. McDonald, like many dwarfs, was born with a spinal column too small to contain his spinal cord properly, leaving him vulnerable to pinched nerves. He had three operations last year to prevent paralysis, but knows that a trauma could paralyze him at any time. He said a friend of his became paralyzed after sneezing in the shower.

At Father Judge High School, he earned a varsity letter in basketball — as manager of the team. "I wanted to play, but I couldn't. . . . At 4-foot-2, I sure wouldn't want to play football and have 300 pounds fall on me. With short legs, I would have to hit a triple to get to first base."

He went through high school without a single date. "At times," he said, "I thought maybe I should just become a priest."

Associated Press

Little People of America members gathered for a photo at 1983 convention in Boston. This year they're meeting in Philadelphia.

Yet at Drexel University, where he studied engineering, he had the confidence to ask women in bars for dates. One of them was Carol, an average-size woman (5-foot-3), whom he dated for five months and married.

On his first job, with the Army Corps of Engineers, McDonald the engineer found that he could go places in the engine room where no one else could go.

When he and Carol decided to have children, they knew the odds were 50-50 that their children would be dwarfs. Their son, Brendan, was born an achondroplastic dwarf, like his father. The McDonalds were ecstatic to have a healthy baby, the father said.

(Doctors who specialize in short-stature medicine will discuss birth and other medical issues at the convention tomorrow. Two achondroplastic dwarfs having a child face odds of 25 percent that the child will be average-size, 50 percent that it will be a dwarf and 25 percent that it will be a "double dominant" dwarf, with a mutant gene from each parent, causing a lethal condition that can kill within weeks.)

Brendan, now 13, stands 4 feet, ½ inch tall — "He's closing in on his father," McDonald said — and seems to be adjusting well. He's a Boy Scout, is outgoing, has lots of friends, calls his father "Shorty" and says he'll surpass him in height some day. He'll be participating in teen programs at the convention, which will include advice on dating and dances for little people.

About half the 1,000 people expected at the convention are average-size people, who outnumber little people in the organization by a 2-1 ratio. Average-size parents, children and siblings of little people will attend workshops, such as one titled "Our Life Is Affected, Too."

"When you're married to a little person, you've got to put up with society calling them names," McDonald said. "You try to look the other way. For little people, it's almost easier."

Parents are often the worst. Their children simply say, "Mommy, look at that little man," McDonald said. But parents stigmatize little people by being embarrassed, and by hushing their children up or even scolding them. "I've seen children hit for noticing me," McDonald said.

"At 41, I feel I'm well-adjusted to that stuff," he said. "Sure, if I had a bad day and some kid — little kids never bother me — but if some teenager is on my case, that day it might bother me, but the day before I'd laugh it off, say, 'Hey, guys, you're right.' But I'm human.

"I've been asked what my message to society is. My message is: When you see us, just say hi."

Sunday - 1-11-87 - S.F. Chronicle

A Painful Way to Grow

Boy is made taller through series of agonizing operations

BY MICHAEL WINERIP

Moonachie, N.J.

Anthony Tarabocchia Jr. is an athletic, outgoing boy, normal in every way, except that he was born a dwarf. "Since birth," said his mother, Mary, "my goal has been to find something for him. I thought if they could transplant hearts and send people to the moon, they could help Anthony grow."

She took him to doctors for hormone injections when he was 2 and to Lourdes for the baths, but still Anthony stayed small. Then she heard of an operation being done in Europe that could add a foot of height. She asked a dozen American doctors but could find none to do it, because they felt it too painful and risky.

"Every doctor I went to said, 'Accept him as he is,' " Mrs. Tarabocchia said. "It was easy for them to say. I love him, I accept him, but will the world accept him?'"

So last year the Tarabocchias took Anthony to Italy to be lengthened.

The procedure involves a series of operations spread over five years. In the first phase, doctors worked on the bottom half of 9-year-old Anthony's legs.

They broke the bone in two places, just below the knee and above the ankle. Thirteen wires were put through the skin and bone of each lower leg, attached to a system of braces and screws surrounding the legs.

Instead of allowing the surgical breaks to completely heal together, doctors turned the screws in Anthony's leg every day for eight months, separating the breaks a millimeter more a day, spurring the broken bone to produce more bone.

For eight months, Mrs. Tarabocchia slept on a cot beside Anthony's hospital bed. She would wake to see Anthony asleep sitting up, head on his chest, arms on his braces; he had drowsed off trying to massage the pain from his legs.

"Other children used to scream every day," she said. "Anthony, you saw the eyes, you saw the pain in his face."

BY PETER MONSEES/THE RECORD

Anthony Tarabocchia Jr. after his homecoming

When the pain was worst, Tarabocchia felt that maybe she had made a mistake. "I'd say, 'Anthony, are you sorry we're doing this?' " she said. "He'd say, 'It's painful, Mommy, but look at my legs.' " He could see them growing.

For several years, Mrs. Tarabocchia had asked if he wanted the operations, and he always said no. Anthony explained it this way: "When I was like 5, I didn't know if I was little. Then when I got 8, kids started getting bigger than me. The kids made fun of me, like, 'You're small and you have a big head.' "

He went away 3-foot-8 and came home late last year in a wheelchair, fluent in Italian and 4-foot-3.

A Johns Hopkins professor specializing in dwarfism, Dr. Steven Kopits, said doctors in the United States generally reject the procedure because risks of side effects are great. The induced bone growth often is weak and vulnerable to breaks and infection, he said.

In several patients, he said, muscle is damaged, and the result is an inability to control the foot and a waddling gait.

"I am appalled by how many parents I see who ignore all this," he said, "because all they see is height."

But he also said that the technique had improved recently and that it was being done in this country "here and there, silently, without fanfare."

The director of the department of pediatrics and medical genetics birth defects center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, Dr. David L. Rimoin, recently attended a meeting in Rome on the procedure and examined patients who underwent it. "I was surprised and very encouraged," he said. "It takes time, effort and a lot of money, but there may be a place for it."

"I didn't want him to say to me some day, 'Mommy, why didn't you do this for me?' " Mrs. Tarabocchia said.

The family is not wealthy — Anthony's father is a carpenter and his mother is a hairdresser. Blue Cross considers the procedure experimental and does not pay the medical bills, which were $200 a day. So neighbors have started a fund, raising money through dances and raffles.

Christmas 1985 was the low point. Even seven suitcases of presents relatives brought to Italy did not help. "He was like a little old man, quiet," his mother said.

Now, she said, he is himself again. Asked if he is happy, Anthony said, "Yes, because now my legs are bigger and kids don't make fun of me now." Without operations, he would have been expected to reach 4-foot-5; with them, he may hit 5-foot-3.

Mrs. Tarabocchia notices that he is more mature than a typical child. "Most children," she said, "are all for themselves, but Anthony will thank people for sacrificing to come and visit him. Pain, I think, makes people grow."

If everything is on schedule, he will have the braces off by March and walk without crutches soon after.

Anthony said he was a little worried about the next series of operations, to lengthen the thigh. "Why?" he said. "The pain."

"We'll wait a year for the next one," his mother said.

"You said, maybe two," Anthony answered softly.

New York Times

Monday, August 3, 1987

Staff Photography by **Bob Laramie**

Lacey Rasa, 7, shares secret with her sister, Allison, 5

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI TRIO Only 24, diminutive Petrucciani is already a giant at the jazz keyboards. His piano playing is marked by a romantic zest in the Bill Evans mode. He's backed by Dave Holland on bass and Eliot Zigmund on drums. Kuumbwa, 7:30 & 9:30pm, Monday.

"The Sun" May 7, 1987

Small beginnings

By Andrew Veitch

SCIENTISTS who have unearthed the world's oldest dwarf now believe that the notion that society should care for handicapped people predates the welfare state by more than 11,000 years.

The prehistoric 3ft-tall dwarf — an Italian adolescent from the Palaeolithic era — has been named Romito by the scientists. He lived with a tribe of nomadic hunter-gatherers in the mountains of southern Italy. His skeleton shows that, despite his severe handicaps, he survived the rugged lifestyle for 17 years.

That, combined with his privileged burial site, suggests that he must have been fed and cared for by members of his social group, according to a report in the science journal, Nature.

Romito's remains suggest he suffered from an inherited form of dwarfism called acromesomelic dysplasia. His intelligence was probably normal, but his short legs, and deformed arms — he was unable to extend his forearms fully — show that he would have had difficulty in keeping pace with his wandering tribe, let alone hunt for food.

When he died, he was given special funeral treatment. The site of his grave, at Riparo del Romito in a valley linking the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Ionian, was an important social or ritual centre. Few had the status necessary to be buried there, but there is no evidence that he was considered a deity.

The treatment accorded to Romito "may attest to his acceptance by the group despite his severe handicaps and his limited ability to contribute to subsistence and other economic activities," the scientists say.

Other cases of dwarfism have been found in cemeteries dating from the Middle Ages, but Romito predates these by more than 5,000 years.

"Besides being the earliest known case of dwarfism in the human record, this skeleton provides evidence of tolerance and care for a severely deformed individual" more than 11,000 years ago, says Dr David Frayer, from Kansas University, and his team of US and Italian scientists.

Little People Honor Joan Ablon

UCSF professor of medical anthropology Joan Ablon has been awarded a lifetime honorary membership in the Little People of America.

Pictured here with local LPA members and activists Harriet and Al Stickney, Ablon was honored for two books which have resulted from her research with LPA members over the past decade: *Little People in America: The Social Dimensions of Dwarfism* (Praeger, 1984) and *Living with Difference: Families with Dwarf Children* (Praeger, forthcoming).

Harriet and Al Stickney pointed out that until Joan Ablon's 1984 work there was nothing that dwarf individuals or parents with dwarf children could read which spoke to their own life experiences or the social future of their children. Ablon says that the barriers to little people are not so much due to their physical stature but more to their social environment.

Little People of America is a 30-year-old organization with more than 4,000 members nationwide providing support to profoundly short persons and their families.

Mikkel Aaland

Joan Ablon with Harriet & Al Stickney

UCSF NEWSBREAK
OCT 28 - NOV 6 1987

LOS ANGELES

AUGUST

1987

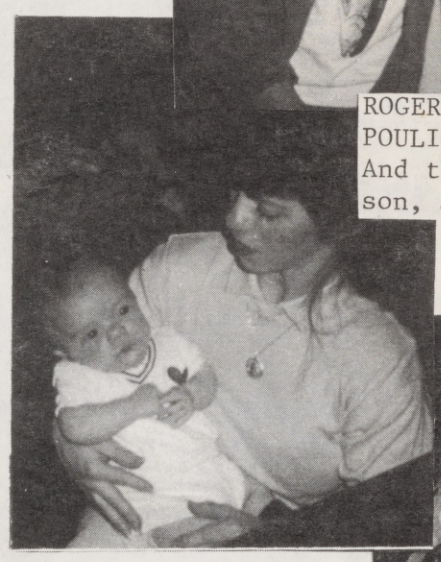
NEWSLETTER

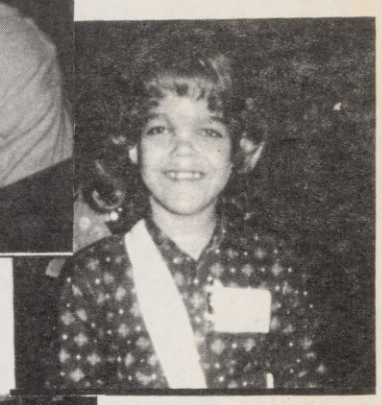
GEORGE and SUE ROSSITTO, Burbank, with son, NICHOLAS--we FINALLY got them together for newsl. pix!

COLLEEN BELL and brother, BRIAN, from Orange Blossom Chapter...

ERIN GARMAN holding MEMORIAL DAY picnic balloons. It was a festive time for all attending...

ROGER & STACIE (Nichols) POULIOT from Michigan-- And then MOM STACIE with son, JACOB AARON!





TRACEY HARRISON from Loma Linda

ALLISON ARIES and son, LOGAN. Happiness is ALLISON and son, LOGAN--a real charmer!

REMEMBER OUR DISTRICT CONVENTION IN BAKERSFIELD OCTOBER 9-11!

TOO SHORT?	Want To Drive? - be independent-
Pedal Extensions for the person 3' to 4'8"	Easy to install. The gas, brake, and clutch extends from 4" to 18". Guided by clear instructions, you will clamp them onto your existing car pedals. Transferable from one vehicle to another. The versatility of these devices will will allow you to rent a car anywhere and rely less on other forms of transportation. They're great for Driver's Education! ! !

To order your extensions, please send this form. Gas and brake pedal set - $130.00. Gas, brake, with clutch set, - $198.00. Please add $6.00 for shipping and handling. Overnight delivery $25.00. California residents add 6-1/2% sales tax. Please make check payable to Chuck Secor. *Satisfaction Guaranteed.*

Easy Rider Pedal Extensions
P. O. Box 7677, Glendale, CA 91205 * (213) 664-2914

1987 L.P.A.
PHILADELPHIA GAMES

The L.A. athletes returned home from PHILLY following a very successful and triumphant week. The guys and gals from L.A. took home more medals than any other chapter or district.....a total of 35 medals!! Congratulations!

MEN'S FINAL STANDINGS

ATHLETE	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
Scott Danberg	7	0	2	9
Michael Gilden	1	2	2	5
Kevin Thompson	1	0	2	3
Eric Heslington	2	0	0	2
Dave Myers	1	0	1	2
Tony Cox	1	0	0	1

WOMEN'S FINAL STANDINGS

Pam Grizz	4	3	2	9
Elena Bertagnolli	2	0	1	3
Tracey Thompson	1	0	0	1
Total:	20	5	10	35

"A chance to compete athletically provides an invaluable sense of pride and personal self worth. The exhilaration of winning is only the icing on the cake." (Pam Grizz)

Mr. Lyle Myers, President
Los Angeles Chapter, LPA
5419 Hermitage, Apt. 2
N. Hollywood, CA 91607
(818) 508-0635

SPOKESMAN-REVIEW CHRONICLE OCT 18, 1987

Keeping their heads held high

Staff photo by DAN PELLE

Genetics counselor Pat Cooper of Walla Walla cradles Davina Wilson, 7, of Newport during "First Pacific Northwest Short Stature Medical Symposium and Clinic," which ends today.

Little people share advice for handling short stature

By Kerry Godes
Staff writer

For Lee Ann Hightower, falling in love was a dizzying, thrilling experience.

"When I met him I knew — bammo — there were stars," she said.

But deciding to marry the man she loved was tougher. How do you tell your family that your future husband is a dwarf?

"I went through a lot when I first met him and recognized the feelings I had for him," said Hightower, who stands at least a foot taller than her 4-foot, 6-inch husband. "I wondered, can I really accept this person into my life?"

Hightower calls it a mixed marriage and says she has had to battle many of the prejudices encountered by couples of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. On Saturday, she shared her story at a meeting of the Little People of America support group.

The conference, the "First Pacific Northwest Short Stature Medical Symposium and Clinic," ends today. Approximately 160 people attended the event, which featured medical experts from around the country and wide-ranging discussion groups on social and legal issues.

It's been nine years since Hightower married her husband, and the couple now have two sons. One of the boys will grow up to be of average height, but the other inherited his father's condition — achondroplasia — and will be a little person.

Just knowing that there are other people like them is a great relief to many little people, said Michael Donlan, a Spokane pediatrician and director of the Inland Empire Genetic Counseling Clinic.

Donlan said there are at least 200 identified types of dwarfism, but the most common variety still strikes only two or three of the babies born in Washington state every year. That makes the odds of being a little person about one in 25,000, he said.

"I think a lot of people wonder why and how I was attracted to someone so different from myself," Hightower said. "But I've learned that it's not my problem or the little person's prob-

(See Short on page 2)

Short——(Continued from page 1)——

lem, it's society's problem."

True, said Colleen Chase, a young woman who stands barely 4 feet tall. But it's still hard for her, as a little person, to understand why someone her size would want to date a tall person.

"There is a prejudice that exists between both groups. It's just there," Chase said.

Muriel Reid can sympathize. For years, she says, her normal-size sisters tried to fix her up with every short man they could find.

Although she's bright, interesting and pretty, Reid had problems finding men who were interested in dating a woman who's only 3-foot-11. Still, she said, she quickly brought a halt to her sisters' efforts after they brought home a short man who not only was unemployed but was alcoholic as well.

"We could be two opposite people, he could be a real creep with terrible table manners," she said, "but all my sisters would see was that he was short.

"I've gone out with both and it's definitely nicer to waltz around the dance floor with a short man," Reid added. "But you have to take a person individually."

Nancy and Chris Webster first met three years ago at a Little People of America convention in Spokane. Two months ago, Nancy gave birth to the couple's first child, Rachel.

Although they've adjusted to their lifestyle as little people and don't need as much support, Nancy said, the couple continues to attend the conferences just in case someone else needs them.

"Maybe some of them do have chips on their shoulders ... or there's some who need our advice or who can just look at us and say, 'Well, they did it. They're happy and they had a baby.'

"This conference is not really about changing your life, but about making it easier," she said.

SHIRLEY HARPER, LILLY JOHNSON & ROBERT ROOD

WESTERN NIGHT AT THE DISTRICT CONVENTION--GRACIE OLIVER & PAST DIST. DIRECTOR, RICHARD CRANDALL ARE READY FOR FUN!

AT LABOR DAY PARTY, TOMMY MADDEN PROUDLY COLLECTS A BET FROM LOUISE YANKOFSKY! HE DID NOT LET ANYONE SMOKE IN HIS NEW HOUSE FOR 6 MONTHS, AND STILL HASN'T (NOT EVEN MARTI!).

THREE LOVELY LADIES--L to R, GEORGIA ROOD, SHIRLEY LESCHANDER, AND MYRTLE PETTY.

JENNIFER BOLAND, GLENDORA--A REAL SWEETHEART.....

BACK ROW (L TO R), JEFFREY OCONE, FULLERTON, & CLINTON ARTRAN, SIMI VALLEY, WITH THEIR WESTERN FRIENDS...

pixs by brown, hoyt & harper.

his wife where she visited family there and in Ada, OK, and also in Springfield, OK. She returned Oct. 1 to her home in Bakersfield with her sister, MARY LAWRENCE, and her daughter, THERESA, also of Bakersfield...MIKE & MARILYN HOYT, Long Beach, have had an up and down year...MIKE'S mother, GLORIA LESKELA, Long Beach, passed away, and then later, MARILYN'S brother, RALPH MOSS, of Long Beach....On a more happy note, MARILYN flew home to Detroit for her 50th birthday, and visited family and friends there. She is keeping busy working the swing shift at Hughes, and MIKE continues to work days at Garrett, in Torrance...MONIQUE HAMILTON, a sophomore at J.F. Kennedy High School, won 2nd prize for her Halloween Costume at school. Her seamstress grandmother, BARBARA YTURRALDE, created the **UNIQUE** costume for **MONIQUE**!...BRIAN LUNA, we haven't seen you, nor any of your family for some time...Where are you, BRIAN??...DARCY PAINTER, DANIEL MARGULIES, LEE KITCHENS, and RUTH RICKER, went to Washington, DC in October to attend a Human Growth Conference...The picnic in Fountain Valley, Nov. 7, was well attended! It rained all week, but had great weather for that day! You missed a good one, those of you who didn't show! Our National President, DANIEL MARGULIES, came up from San Diego, where he is temporarily residing, due to work reasons...Great to see you, DANIEL, and also many others! It was a nice surprise to see LYLE CAIN, (now 16!), his parents, BARBARA and ALLAN, and LYLE'S sister, MELISSA, 5 at the picnic...The CAINS live in Garden Grove...Welcome to California, JOE HAMMOCK...where did you say you were from, JOE??

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

Lydia Thomas, Leroy Lambert, Patrick McGinity (aux), Leslye Sneider, Lori Barty, Michelle Artran, Keith Calzada (aux), Shawna Hailey (aux), Claire Hayes, Monica Love, Roland Stone, Nora Davidian (aux), Vicki Napoli, Stacie Nichols Pouliot, George Rossitto, Allison Aries, Cecelia Roll, Brook Holtsclaw (aux), Katherine Sotomayor, Brad Gayley, Sue Silla, Traci Harrison, Kathy Gieb, Steve Ginesi, Leilani Shiu, Daniel Delgadillo, Richard Crandall, Nels Nelson, Lyle Cain, Steven Ocone (aux), Shelly O'Neil, Adriana Bohorquez, and Julie Brown.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

Pam Grizz, Judy Byzewski, Veronica Gonzales, Matthew McCarthy, Keith Roll (aux), Retha Phoenix (aux), Kathy Erb, Nicholas Rossitto (aux), Ronald Miller (aux), Heather Davis, Midori Izumi (aux), Sue Rossitto, Lilly Johnson, Frances Ybarra, Mary Lou Naccarato, Mary Levin (sup), Karl Hailey (aux), Mike Hoyt (aux), Holly Miller (aux), David Roll, Jonathon Davidian, Barry Taylor, Jr. (aux), Linda Risch, Elizabeth Maren, Isaac Vera (aux), Jose Vera (aux), Eric Heslington, Mark Phoenix, Ethel Shiffer (aux), Don Bell (aux), and Jose Zentino.

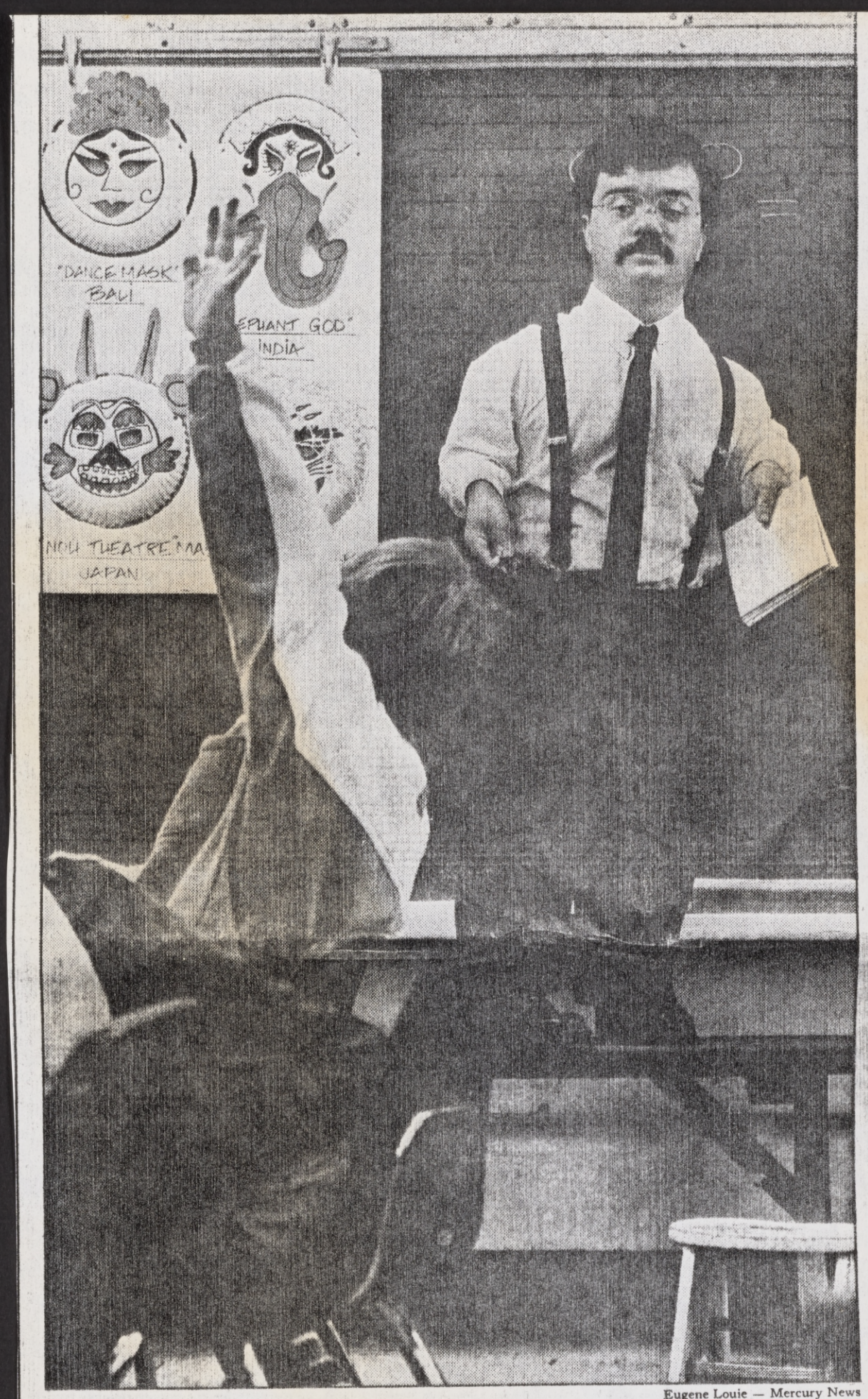
BAR MITZVAH FOR DAVID BROWN OF CYPRESS

It was a great day for David Brown of Cypress on Saturday, August 22, at Temple Beth David in Westminster. It was his Bar Mitzvah! Many friends and family gathered for the occasion. A dinner reception followed the service at the Connestoga Hotel in Anaheim. We're proud of you, David, and wish you the very best in life!

LOS ANGELES CHAPTER NEWS
NOV-DEC 1987

Lyle Myers, President
Louise Yankofsky, Vice President
Debbie Dixon, Treasurer
Leslye Sneider, Secretary
Penny Frishman, Board Member
Susie Barnes, Board Member
Allison Aries, Parents Chairperson
Shirley Harper & Chuck Secor, Co-Editors Nov-Dec Newsletter
Billy Barty

OUR DAVID BROWN AT HIS BAR MITZVAH...



Eugene Louie — Mercury News

John Stocklin, 8, answers a question for teacher Todd Shepard

4 feet 2 is no measure of P.A. teacher's stature

By Jacqueline Cutler
Mercury News Staff Writer

Todd Shepard's second-graders aren't being smug when they look down on him.

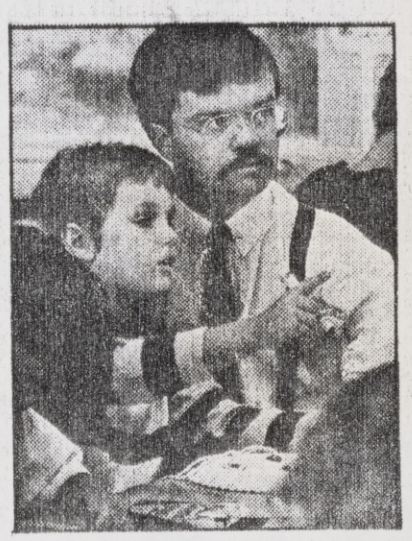
It's just that their teacher is 4 feet 2 — shorter than all but two of his 28 students at Palo Verde School in Palo Alto.

But they still look up to him for leadership. And as Shepard ends his first year as a teacher, the 31-year-old ex-computer worker has proven he has what it takes.

His students greet him with the singsong chant of "Good Morn-ing Mr. Shep-ard" that has probably greeted teachers since the Middle Ages. They look to him for approval when they've answered a question correctly and sneak forlorn glances his way when they've erred. He is, undoubtedly, in command.

Yet he can rarely escape being reminded of his tiny frame. He fits comfortably in a child's chair, making his mustache and deep voice seem incongruous.

See TEACHER, Back Page



ENGROSSED — David Siddall, 8, talks with Todd Shepard about lesson on masks.

For teacher, size not key to stature

TEACHER, from Page 1A

Sometimes ignorance and cruelty reign, such as when people point at him in supermarkets. Depending on who's doing the gawking and his mood, Shepard might explain he is a little person — he shuns "dwarf" as too clinical — or point back. "Or they'll say, 'Look, a midget!' " he said. "And I'll say 'Where?' "

The word midget offends him; he says it was coined by circus folk for little people who were clowns.

Rather than resort to bitterness, Shepard tries to show he is no different from anyone else. He also tries to pass on to his charges the self-esteem that many influential teachers and his parents, a Stanford University psychology professor and a lecturer in children's literature, instilled in him.

"The deal with self-esteem is mainly realizing that it's most important for people to realize that we all are different, but we all have positive things to contribute," Shepard said.

Praises innovation

What he has to offer shines as he helps a new reader sound out a word. Shepard questions students' comprehension as they wend their way through Weekly Reader and praises innovative answers.

> 'It's just the way he is. It doesn't matter if he's small, or big or medium.'
>
> *— Rachael Kleidon, pupil*

To many students, Shepard's gender is more of an issue than his height.

"I had to get used to Mr. Shepard because I hadn't had a boy teacher yet," Beth Aufdemberge said. "And I never had a little person who's been a teacher."

Added her pal Rachael Kleidon: "On the first day of school, it was fun, and it still is and our activities are very fun. I just treat him the same way I would another teacher. It's just the way he is. It doesn't matter if he's small, or big or medium."

Wanting to help others led Shepard into teaching. And by all accounts, teaching has been as rewarding for him as it has been for his students.

"I think it's been a real good year," said Barbara Smith, whose daughter Melinda is in Shepard's class. "No matter what, it's been a great experience for kids."

Shepard is not a pioneer in choosing teaching as his profession, said Harriet Stickney, spokeswoman for Little People of America, a national support group based in San Bruno.

Must establish discipline

As a little person, being a teacher "is a challenge," said Stickney, who taught for 12 years. "You have to establish discipline, because if your class is going to fall apart it might be blamed on the fact that you are a little person."

Discipline and setting the tone in class is especially difficult for first-year teachers, said Ruth Carleton, a first-grade teacher at Palo Verde.

"With many beginning teachers, it's very hard to get a handle on who you are," she said. "And you are the teacher. Getting the children to realize you are the person in charge is always very, very difficult. He has overcome that."

When Shepard started last fall, he "had some trouble with kids listening to him," Smith said. But when he realized the classroom regulations he had posted weren't effective, he had the class help him write new ones.

The revised rules are simple, calling for students to follow directions and not talk when someone else is speaking.

When the class becomes a little noisy, Shepard simply stops. He folds his arms across his chest and waits. It doesn't take long.

During a recent multiplication lesson, he commanded the class from his perch — standing atop a picnic bench. He also uses a bench when he wants to write high on the blackboard.

'Student of the Week' event

Implicit in Shepard's classroom is that each child is important. Each week the spotlight shines on a different "Student of the Week." The chosen student calls the others to recess, leads the line and runs errands to the office. Classmates draw pictures for (often of) the student, which are displayed on a central bulletin board.

Other details of classroom decor also are testament to self-esteem. Shepard had all of his students make posters depicting their good points. Eric Gray's had some dinosaurs and stars and this self-evaluation: "hard-working, neat, dependable."

> 'We all have positive things to contribute.'
>
> *— Todd Shepard*

If Tom Steege, principal of Palo Verde, drew such a poster about Shepard it would be equally flattering. Steege said he hired Shepard because "I consider him an intelligent person, capable of learning."

He should know. He remembers Shepard as a student at the former Stanford Elementary School, where Steege was principal. "He had enough courage within him that he could make his way," Steege said. "He stands up for himself."

Shepard said he was not teased much as he grew up on the Stanford campus. His parents expected him to be treated as everyone else, and Shepard was never segregated in special classes.

"The only way that I felt like it got in my way was I was always picked last for sports," Shepard said, which hurt because he harbored dreams of making varsity teams.

Shepard still enjoys sports — especially basketball. He is a proficient shooter.

After graduating from Gunn High School, Shepard attended the University of California, Davis.

"I knew I wanted to work with kids, or help people in some way," Shepard said.

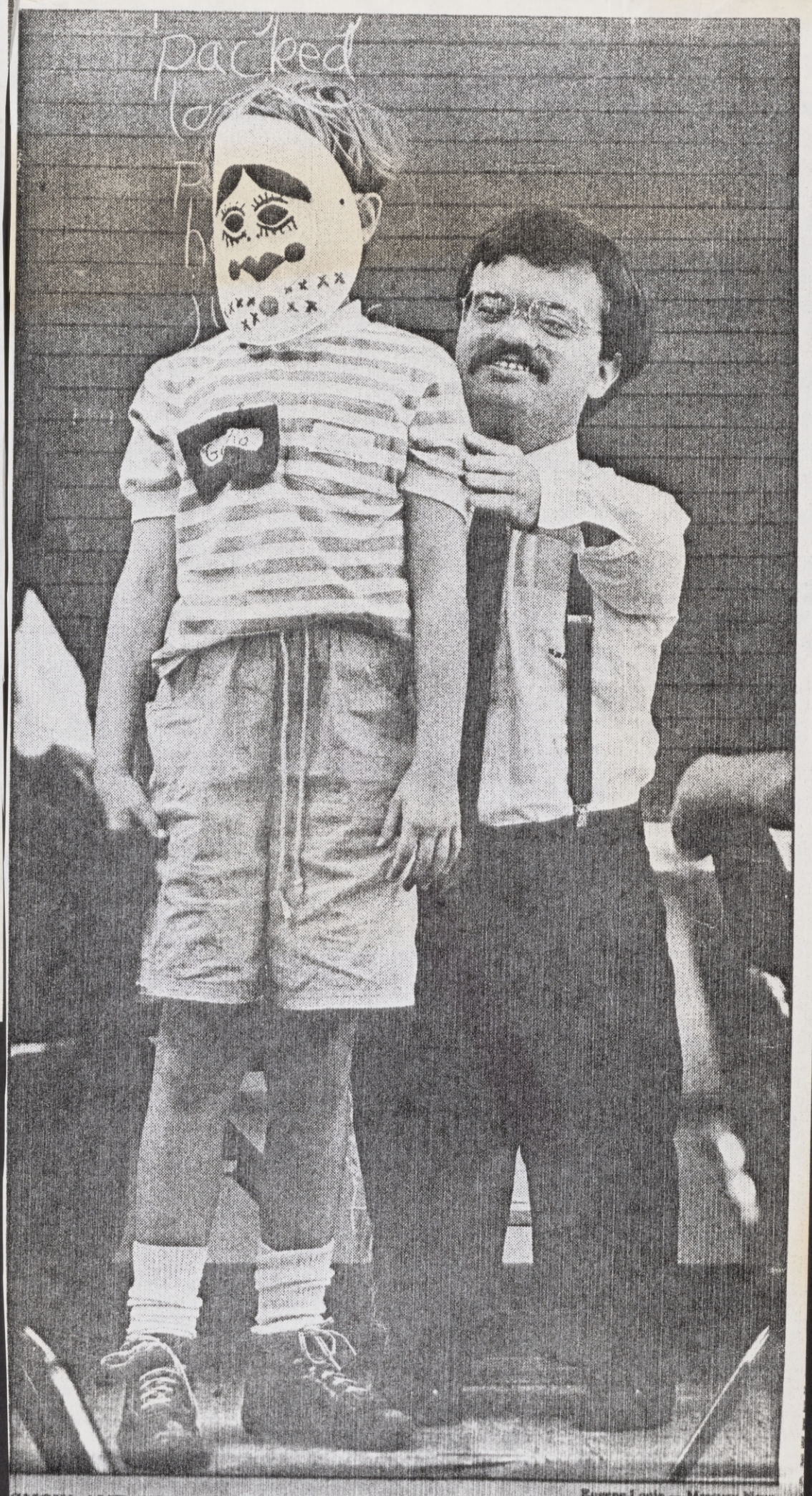
But when he graduated in 1981, there was a glut of teachers. So he became a computer programmer and worked for Lockheed for four years.

"I finally reached a point where enough was enough, and I enrolled in a credential program," he said.

Making that move also impressed Steege: "The change from computers showed that he had a mission and that he held children higher than the almighty dollar.

"I like to see a man on the staff. And it's a society of diversity, and children need to see that at an early age."

Being little, Shepard said, is "considered a handicap. The interesting thing about being a little person is that I don't feel handicapped per se. I feel handicapped to the extent that there's things I can't reach or whatever. But in the end that's not a big deal."

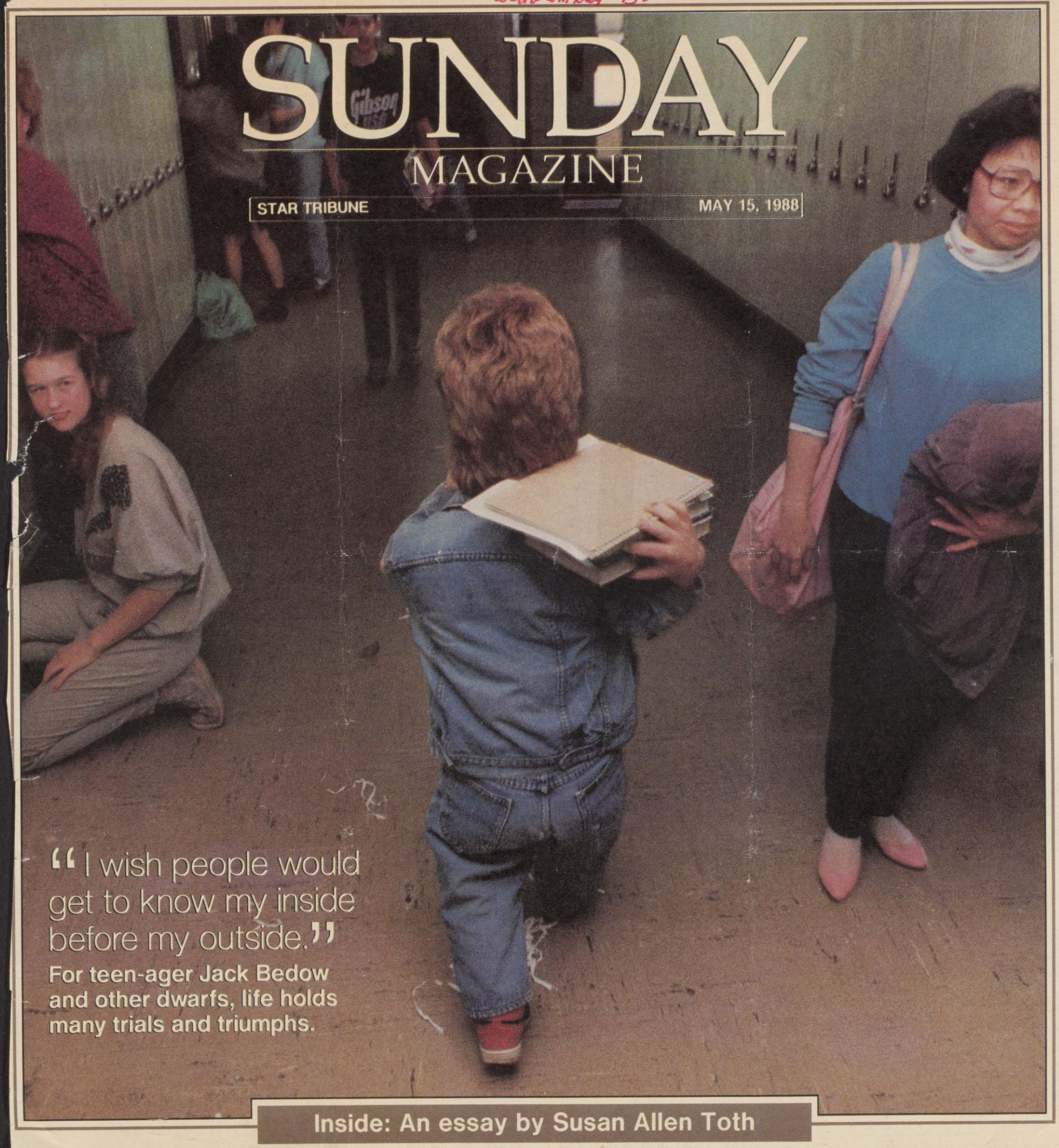


SHOW AND TELL — Gosha Samotyj, 8, displays the mask made with the help of teacher Todd Shepard, who helps her as she explains it to the class.

Eugene Louie — Mercury News

Read from Kay - B.

SUNDAY
MAGAZINE
STAR TRIBUNE MAY 15, 1988



"I wish people would get to know my inside before my outside."

For teen-ager Jack Bedow and other dwarfs, life holds many trials and triumphs.

Inside: An essay by Susan Allen Toth

SUNDAY
MAGAZINE
STAR TRIBUNE MAY 15, 1988

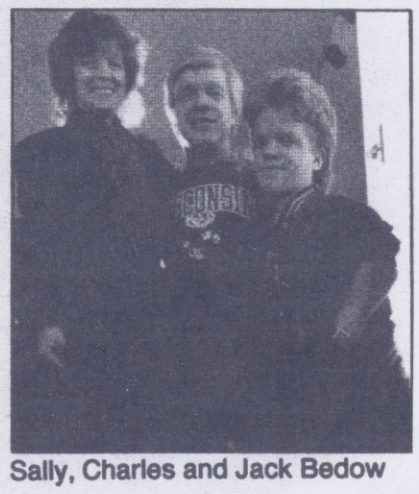
Little people

As a child in Pennsylvania I remember the midway at the Great Allentown Fair having girlie shows, freak shows and midget shows. Even back in the '50s most of us would have quickly agreed that the freak and girlie shows were derogatory.

The midget shows with their song-and-dance, vaudevillian atmosphere were not as obviously degrading. However, they did separate the little people into a group unto itself.

The emphasis, as I remember, was on cute. And that cute label, we read in Bob Ehlert's story on dwarfs, is just as derogatory as any of the other more obvious stereotypes heaped upon other minority groups.

All the little people want is to be treated equally. To have the same chance as the rest of us and be taken out of the midways of our minds and into the mainstream of life.



Sally, Charles and Jack Bedow

Leonard Witt

LITTLE PEOPLE

Don't pat Charles Bedow on the head and call him cute.
Like most dwarfs, he just wants to be treated like everybody else.

By Bob Ehlert
Photos by Richard Sennott

As Charles Bedow is telling his life story over a lunch of black coffee and Pall Malls with no filters, a part of me is trying hard to listen and not be distracted by his size.

Although I have never really considered myself to be small, I have overheard people describe me as "kinda short." On a good day, I am 5 feet 9 inches tall. But Charles is short. He is a dwarf. His wife, Sally, who also is a dwarf, says he is 4 feet 6 inches tall. I don't necessarily buy that as I watch him lean back in that restaurant chair and wave his cigarette like a baton.

Because of the tablecloth there in Jerry's Supper Club, a nice spot in Owatonna, Minn., I can't tell if Charles' legs are pointed straight out from his chair or whether they are bent at the knee and, thus, dangling a foot or so from the ground.

Does it matter? Of course not.

So why can't I stop wondering?

Fortunately a tape recorder is faithfully recording everything Charles and Sally are saying. The Bedows would never dream that I am studying them in such a way. Would they?

Earlier this morning I met their dwarfed son, Jack, who is 16 and—given the full advantage of his modern, puff-top hairdo—he is nearly 4 feet tall. That is about the height of a small pickup-truck bed. I know because I saw him leaning against one in a picture.

I don't know how fair and kind it is to make all of these observations, but I am making them. I record them because, maybe, they are pretty common.

Having just met this family of dwarfs (a dwarfed daughter, Jill, is away at college), I am still overcome by the physical scale of their lives.

At first there is something more fascinating about the graphic aspects of their stature than the gripping details of Charles' upbringing. I feel odd and awkward about these thoughts until about the second pot of coffee.

"My ancestry is from the Bonn, Germany, side. Blondes. I'm the one that Hitler tried to make a lot of—except taller," Charles said, cigarette smoke tooting from his mouth as he laughs.

The Bedows' laughter and frank attitude about their size makes me more at ease around them. The focus of my attention begins to change from their bodies to their minds.

That makes me think about what their son, Jack, said earlier about trying to make friends.

"I wish people would get to know my inside before my outside. You know, sometimes I have to help out. I go to them. I start talking, and they start listening. . . . And they find out what a great guy I am. Hah-hah-hah."

He laughs just like his dad.

Don't be a clown, Charles Bedow's grandfather told him. Bedow says his father (whose photo he holds) took the "easy way out" of dwarfism's problems and became a circus clown.

From the moment I began researching this story, almost every "normal" person who inquired began by telling me a short-person joke or by perpetuating some myth about "midgets," as they would call them.

"Keep the story short," said some colleagues.

Others wanted to know if dwarfs really lived up to the lascivious legends that they had read about.

There are some amazing things written about the cast of the "Wizard of Oz" and the way they liked to entertain themselves between Munchkin scenes. So modern-day dwarfs are always quizzed about drinking and such.

In mythology, dwarfs have been made out to be superhu-

Dwarfs continued on page 8

"This is that time in Jack's life when he will be left behind," his father says. But Jack is enjoying moments like this, joining in the horseplay at a basketball pep rally.

Dwarfs

continued from page 6

man, gods or guardians of treasures. Historically they have been court jesters, circus performers and models for painters.

But the modern picture of dwarfs is largely one of a people who have no choice but to cope in a world that, at times, is too big for them. Many little people—their preferred designation—speak about the "average-size" world in grave tones of detachment.

They are a minority within a subcategory of the handicapped. It is estimated there are about 100,000 in the United States and roughly 300 in Minnesota. Because so many of them are industrious, they tend to solve their own problems before society knows they exist. But life is still tough, and, like it or not, it is doled out on the average-size world's terms.

At a recent meeting of the Twin Cities Chapter of Little People of America—which is a national network of support groups—there were complaints voiced during the dialogue.

"When I get a cab I like to sit in the front seat. It's easier for me to get in and out," said Doug, a bearded dwarf who was born six minutes before his twin brother, who is more than 6 feet tall. "But the cabbies always tell me to get in the back. They won't have it. That makes me so mad."

When someone raised the possibility of the group attending a Minnesota Twins game at the Metrodome, Peter had this to say:

"Do we, as little people, want to subsidize the only professional sport in which we are banned from participating?"

He was referring to the 1951 incident in which Eddie Gaedel, who was 3 feet 7 inches tall, came up to bat as a pinch hitter for Bill Veeck's St. Louis Browns. Gaedel walked on four pitches and was replaced by a pinch runner. The next day, American League President Will Harridge refused to approve the 26-year-old dwarf's professional baseball contract, contending that the use of a "midget" was not in the best interest of the game. Gaedel was released from the team the following day, and no dwarfs have been allowed on major-league rosters since.

The Bedows' son, Jack, played ball for a local Owatonna team last summer.

"He was always either the first or second batter up. And he was a give-me to get a walk. They could not reach the strike zone on him," said Sally. "Sometimes he would take a swing, but usually the coach would tell him to just stand up there... In the field, he played shortstop. Where else would you put him?"

Worse than incidents of prejudice, though, is the perception that the intelligence and contributions of little people are small.

"Some treat short-statured people as though their mental age is equal to their height," said Dr. Lowell Lutter, a pediatric orthopedist (he treats adults too) who conducts clinical research with many of the dwarfs who come to Gillette's Growth and Development Service. "There is a great deal of subtle and overt discrimination.... There are stories and practical jokes, seemingly funny to the average-size people, but something that hurts the pride and body image of the little people."

Bedow sees it all the time.

"What would you think if a man came up to you, my age, and put his hand on your head? And said 'There, now, you're a nice fella,' " said Charles Bedow. "That's what I go through at this age (54). Some clown coming up, who may not know me from Adam, and patting me on the head and saying, 'Oh, nice little boy.' Depending on how it's presented, there are some times when I pat them on the rear end and say, 'Nice buns.' And then they get the point."

Here is a man whose father, a dwarf named Henry Bedow, left the family's southwest Minnesota farm during the Great Depression to become a circus clown beneath the Big Tops from Miami to Montana. He was an alcoholic who lost touch with Charles over the years. Henry's life with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey and the Clyde Beatty circuses is well chronicled in an old scrapbook.

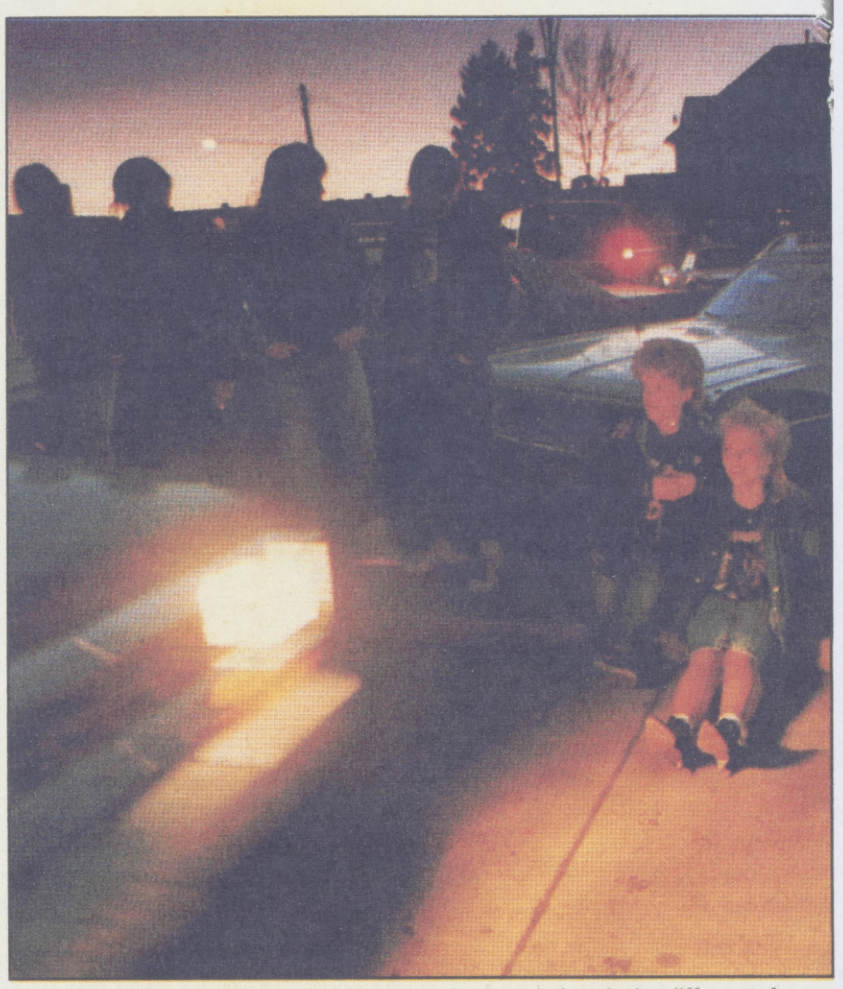
The pictures suggest that Henry found happiness with a troupe of dwarfed clowns. It is a marvelous collection of still-photo pranks, gags, gatherings and performances.

But the final image Charles is left with is a sad and frustrating one. In July 1953 his father painted his last smile. After he mounted an elephant, he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. He dropped to the ground and, for some unexplained reason, was subsequently crushed by the beast.

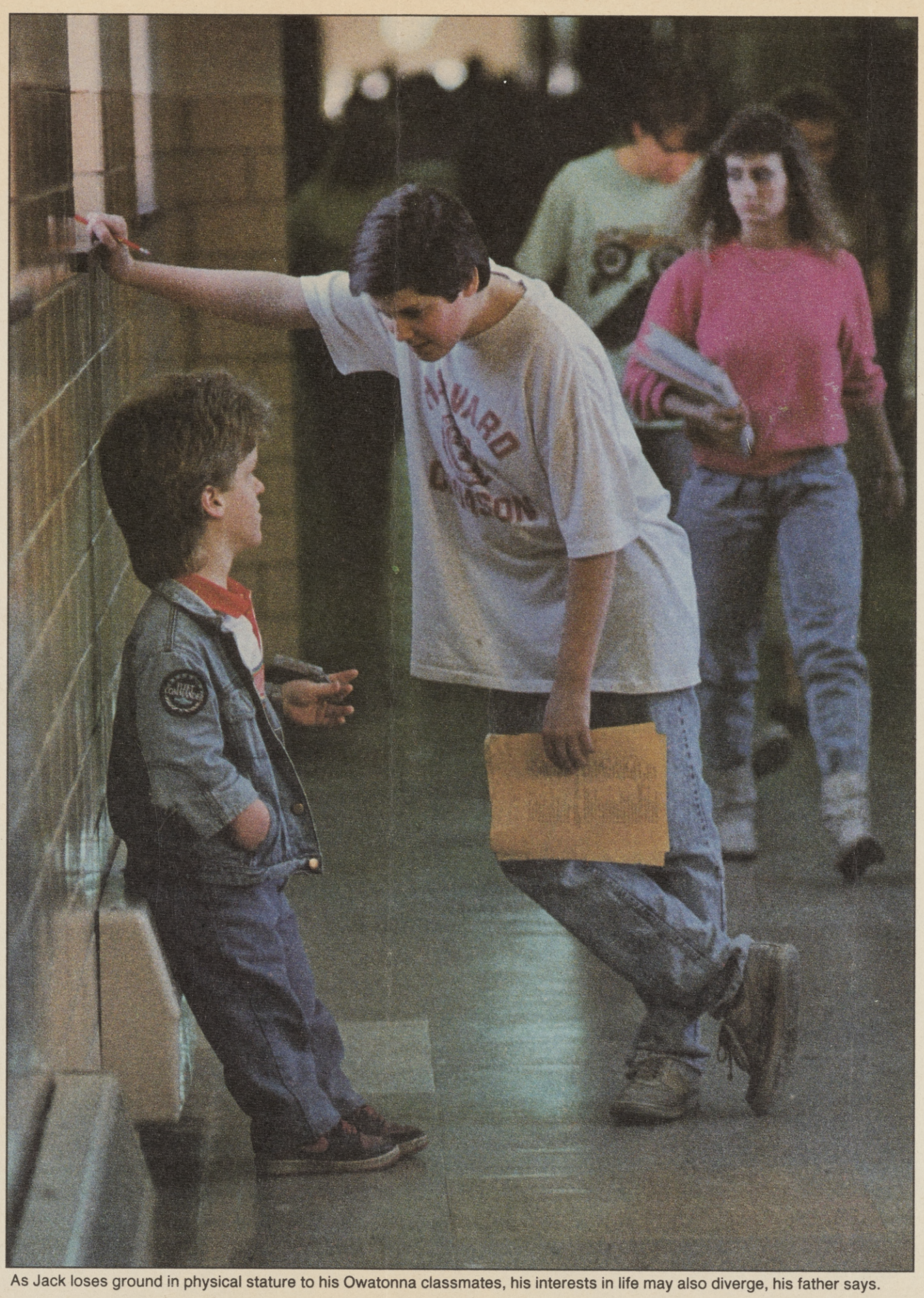
"I just got a call one day, a few days after it had happened," said Charles, an insurance-company executive in Owatonna, where he has lived for about 35 years. "Basically, growing up was sheer torture. My dad was going to support me, but he never did. I heard that he was going to come and support me in California during the war. And he never did."

When Charles was 5, his mother, who was not a dwarf, ran off with another man while Henry Bedow was

A typical teen-ager, Jack hangs out around the pool hall.



Jack Bedow's parents want him to understand that he's different from most other people, but they don't want him to think that his size earns him special treatment.



As Jack loses ground in physical stature to his Owatonna classmates, his interests in life may also diverge, his father says.

out on tour with the circus.

"There was a 'Dear John' letter waiting for him in the kitchen window when he returned," Charles said.

It was then that Charles' memory reached back to the most tender moments of his life, back to 1938, when his mother bid him farewell. Unable or unwilling to recount it, he left it for Sally to say, "His mother turned to him one night as she walked out the door and told him not to cry. She said she'd be back in the morning. She never came back."

Charles lived around with various relatives after that. At about age 10, his grandparents took charge of rearing him, but they were old and feeble, and it was not long before his grandmother fell ill and died. Shortly thereafter, his grandfather was hospitalized. He had slipped into a diabetic coma. When he regained consciousness, he asked to see Charles.

"Some treat short-statured people as though their mental age is equal to their height. There is a great deal of subtle and overt discrimination."

Dr. Lowell Lutter
Orthopedist

"I went to the hospital, and that's when Grandpa made me promise to never join the circus," Charles said. "He said he and Maggie (his wife) had made a mistake by encouraging my father to join. And then, see what happened to my father?

"That would always come to my mind when people would approach me about joining the circus or some carnival or something. That would have been the easy way out, to join the circus. With 'midget wrestling,' any of that entertainment stuff. Everybody got those invitations. It's not that way so much now.

"I tried to commit suicide when I was 17 due to the family situation," Bedow said, his eyes welling up with tears. "What really happened on that, when I was over in Mankato, a 76-year-old German woman sat me down one day and told me how things were. She spoke very bluntly, to the point, with no diplomacy.

"She told me I was as good as anybody else. Size didn't make a whole lot of difference. If I wanted to drag an anchor, I could."

Dwarfs continued on page 10

Dwarfs

continued from page 9

Over the course of the past few months I have come to know about a dozen dwarfs who live in Minnesota.

Along the way I have met or learned about little people who have attempted suicide, been raped, been loved, abandoned, adopted, married, divorced, variously coddled and abused. Living within the mainstream of life, I was not surprised to learn that dwarfs are in professional positions, the arts, working at fast-food joints, Fortune 500 companies—even in unemployment lines.

Somewhere between 100 and 150 members of Minnesota's dwarfed population are affiliated with Little People of America, and they are all looking forward to the national convention in July. This year it will be in Des Moines, Iowa.

The convention is a special time for the little people. It is when a couple of thousand dwarfs and their average-size relatives converge on a city, a hotel, and binge on one another's company for about 10 days. It is the one time each year when the little people can look as far as the eye can see and spot dozens of other people who are no taller than a mailbox.

This year, as always, the little people will hold their version of the Olympic Games. There will be roller-skating parties, barbecues, hayrides, tours and the one, the only, East/West softball game. The little people from the East will do battle with the little people from the West.

At each convention, medical doctors and geneticists are asked to speak and answer questions about dwarfism. There is much to learn, even for the dwarfs themselves.

Charles Bedow's condition, for instance, is called achondroplasia, the most common of the 200 types of dwarfism that appear once in every 20,000 births. Achondroplastics, who account for about 60 percent of the dwarfed population, are characterized by disproportionate limbs, large heads and chronic orthopedic problems. Their bones, rather than growing straight, develop in a spindly pattern. Many achondroplastics resemble one another.

Unlike Charles', the bodies of some dwarfs are proportionate and are generally associated with the unsavory term "midget." In some cases their short stature is a result of the pituitary gland's failure to produce growth hormones. About 5 percent can receive injections of the hormones and grow to average height.

Sally Bedow is classified in yet another category. She has what is called vitamin-D resistant rickets. Because her body resists vitamin D and its benefits, her growth was slowed, and her bones remain so soft they have a tendency to bow. In order that a minimum amount of vitamin D find its way into her system, she must take vitamin and mineral supplements.

The Bedows' daughter, Jill, is achondroplastic. Jack has both his father's achondroplasia and his mother's vitamin-D resistant rickets. The Bedow children are third-generation dwarfs.

"There are doctors to treat a lot of the neurological and bone-disease problems. . . . But people in the hospital can't tell us how to fix their souls."

Beth Ann Bloom
Genetic counselor

Although the medical information and support groups that spin off the convention are important to the little people, not enough can be said about what the convention does for morale —not to mention the possibilities of long-term relationships.

Were it not for the LPA convention in 1964, the Bedows might not have been married.

They first met in Texas, Sally's home state. Charles and his girlfriend had stopped by to meet Sally's parents.

"We were all on our way to the annual convention of Little People of America in Phoenix," said Sally. "Charles and his girlfriend were in one car. In the other car were me, my parents and two other single achondroplastic women. I was 18 at the time, and engaged.

"These two women in our car were just nuts about Charles," said Sally.

"Ohhhhhh! Charlie Bedow is going to be there," they said, hardly able to contain themselves.

"Their biggest interest in Charles was his white Corvette, brand new, 1964. And it was spiffy. It had the rag top and the hard top. He had been working at the insurance company (Federated Insurance) almost nine years. He was a snappy dresser, and he, really, as far as dwarfed men go, he was something—one of the few at that time. So many others weren't in professional positions as he was."

The two women with Sally wanted desperately to ride with Charles in his Corvette.

"The next morning, on the road, we go in for breakfast, and I said to Charles' girlfriend, Frances, 'You must be terribly tired of riding in that icky Corvette. It doesn't even have any air conditioning. You ride with my mom and dad today. I'll ride in the Corvette.'

"I figured if I could break the chain, then these other two women would have a chance. I don't understand yet why Frances agreed. So I plopped my little body down in the Corvette, and I spent the day riding with Charles.

Dwarfs continued on page 12

Jack doesn't care much for "Romeo and Juliet," but that doesn't mean he isn't interested in romance. A letter from a girlfriend arrived, and Jack read it at the mailbox.

Dwarfs

continued from page 10

Well, we kind of banter back and forth.... I've got this guy that I'm engaged to back home. And Charles isn't really too interested in this 18-year-old snot-nosed kid beside him...."

By the next morning, Charles' girlfriend made sure she was in the Corvette. But the seeds of romance already had been planted between Charles and Sally—somewhere on a highway in New Mexico. And by the time the caravan reached Phoenix, well...

Sally invited herself to supper with Charles, minus Frances. They spent the evening together at the LPA dance, and then they found themselves having this conversation:

"How come you've never married?" asked Sally.

"I never intend to marry," said Charles, who half-jokingly refers to himself as a "pretty dwarf... the Tom Selleck" of little people. "I wouldn't feel comfortable with an average-size wife, and I wouldn't feel comfortable having a dwarfed wife either."

The next night, though, there was another conversation.

"Have you ever given any thought to living in Minnesota?" Charles asked.

"None whatsoever," said Sally, an only child, a Texan to boot.

"I think you'd like Minnesota. I think you should consider moving," he said.

"Maybe I probably should," said Sally.

Dwarfs may be cute as kids, Sally Bedow (left) said, but, by adulthood, "Everybody ought to be pulling his own weight."

Not all dwarfs meet their opposite numbers at LPA conventions and live happily ever after. The Bedows didn't even do that.

Yes, they were married later that year, in 1964, but in 1978 they divorced.

"It really didn't have anything to do with size," said Sally. "It was just life. Anyway, we remarried in 1981."

The part of life that the Bedows seem to have mastered is the basic adjustment to their limitations. Dwarfism, they say, is not a curse, it is an inconvenience.

Whereas Charles' adjustment was difficult because of his family situation, Sally's family was an instant support system. Her parents were both dwarfs, respected citizens in their community.

But many dwarfs are born to average-size parents who do not know how to cope with the situation—if they understand it at all.

Dana Duane, a Minneapolis woman who grew up in Lewiston, Minn., was born with achondroplasia. There are no dwarfs in her family tree, and there was no reason to suspect there ever would be.

"She walked at 18 months. She talked right away," said Dorothy Duane, Dana's mother. "There was just no sign of it. There was nothing to get shaken up about, and nothing to compare it to."

In all of Lewiston, which is not such a big place, there was only one other child who was short of stature. It was a boy, older than Dana, whom some of the townfolk called "Stub."

It was difficult for the Duanes to believe their daughter would turn out physically like that boy in town. But as the rest of the kids in Lewiston grew up, Dana's condition only grew more apparent.

"In first grade the principal felt like Dana couldn't handle the stairs," Dorothy said.

As Dana grew up, the truth was no farther away than a mirror. She was short and would be that way all of her life.

She began to blame the dwarfism on her mother because Dorothy was more than 40 years old at the time of Dana's birth. The advanced age of a mother at childbirth is sometimes linked to birth defects.

"I used to tell her that I should have never been born," said Dana, 25, a blonde, 3 feet 10 inches tall. "Why did my parents wait so long to have me? Later I found out that she lost two children between me and my next oldest sister. You would think after the second miscarriage, why not stop? It's like the Catholics don't believe in birth control.

"I had to learn that, hey, you're a person too. Nobody's perfect. It's all over about how I got here. It's too late for that now. It's a psychological thing. You know, for a lot of kids in high school, the trouble was drugs and alcohol. For me, it was, 'Why am I still short?' "

It was not long ago that Dana got a more complete answer to that question.

During a recent visit to Gillette Children's Hospital, where she is a patient of Dr. Lowell Lutter, he explained that her dwarfism is a result of a "spontaneous mutation." Neither parent carried genes for dwarfism, although there is a link between the age of her father at conception and the incidence of achondroplasia. Lutter said fathers older than 35 have a greater chance of producing dwarfed offspring. Dana's father was 42 when she was born.

But knowing everything there is to know about her condition will never change it or help her accept it.

"I keep fantasizing that they're going to find a cure, and I'll be able to be normal size," she said.

Often the fantasy comes as she works behind the cash register at the Burger King on 7th St. and Hennepin Av. S. in Minneapolis. There, with the help of two milk crates, she is able to stand tall enough to reach the keyboard and look her customers in the eye.

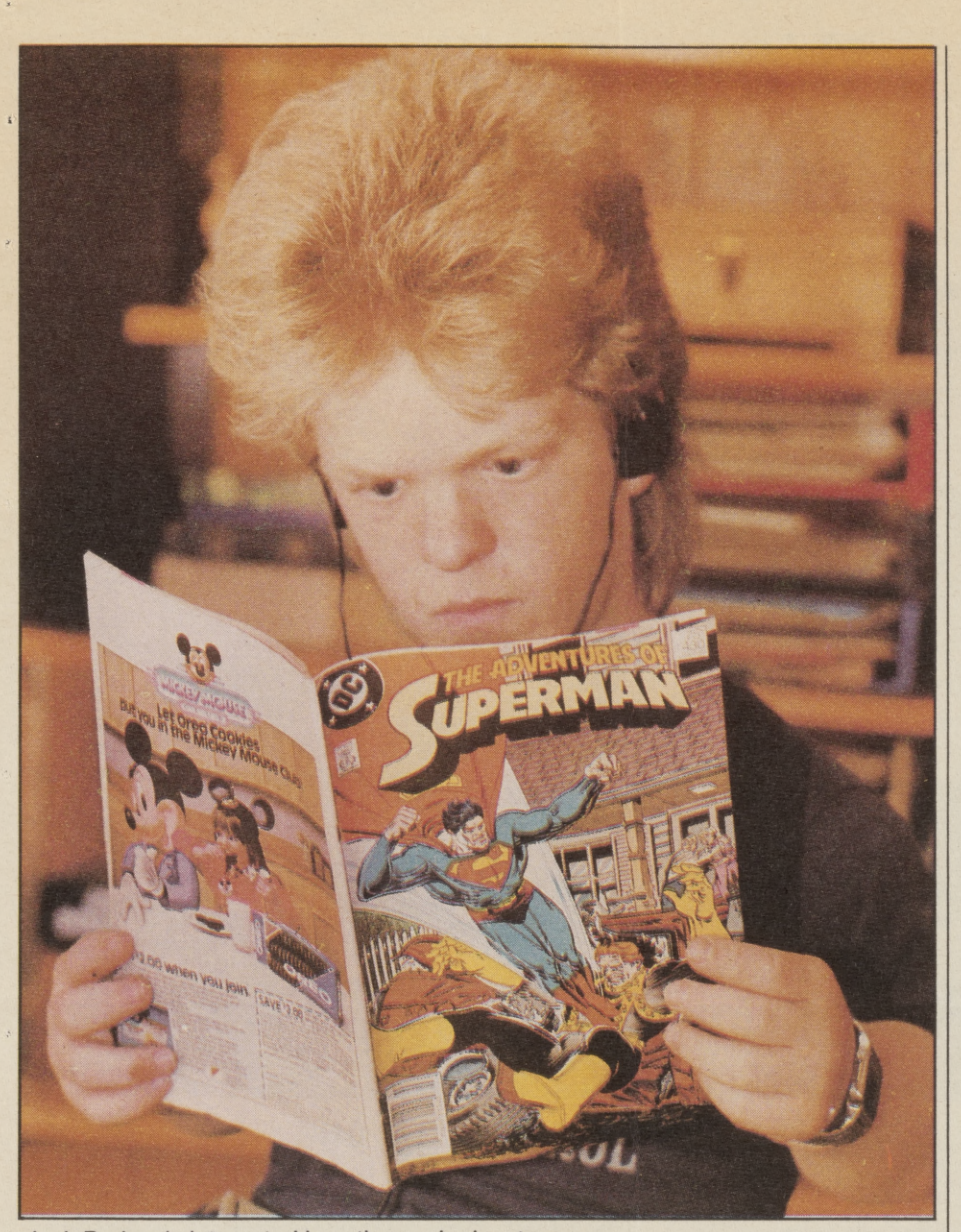
As they approach to give their orders for Whoppers and such, she sometimes looks them over. She wonders if they appreciate their dimensions, and if they are sneaking looks at hers.

Once in a great while another dwarf will come through her line, and Dana is overcome with a mix of indifference and inner turmoil.

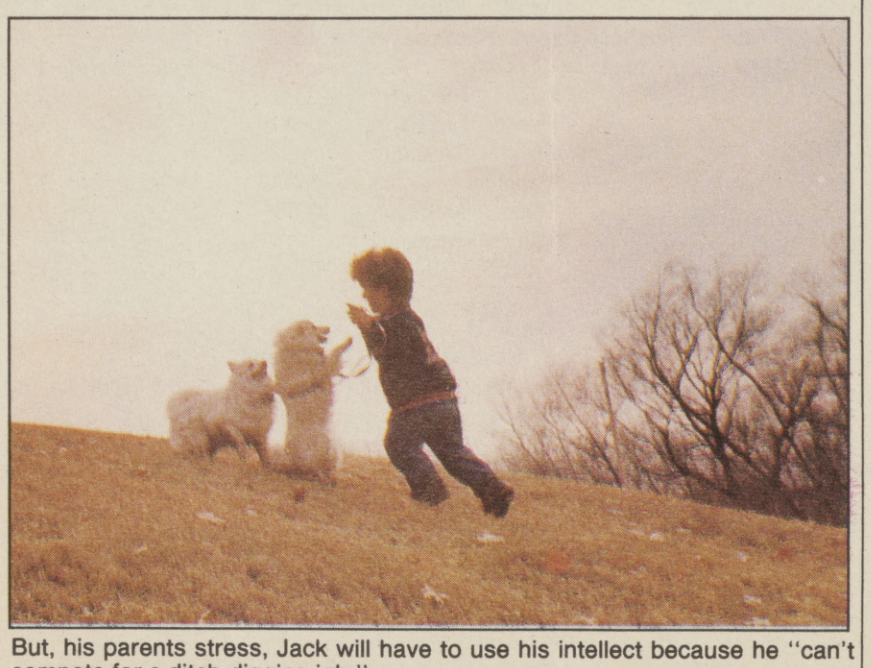
"I don't say anything," Dana said. "I don't like to associate with *them*."

These days she avoids mirrors about as much as LPA meetings. Both tend to reflect things she does not want to see.

Dwarfs continued on page 14



Jack Bedow is interested in action and adventure.



But, his parents stress, Jack will have to use his intellect because he "can't compete for a ditch-digging job."

Dwarfs

continued from page 12

Because of certain physical characteristics, achondroplastics look alike. Dana did not know that five years ago when she attended her first LPA meeting after she had moved to the Twin Cities.

"I have a complex about seeing somebody who looks exactly like me," said Dana, thinking back to the meeting. "In my mind, when I saw so many (dwarfed) people at one time—I mean, I saw a couple of females that looked *exactly* like me, blond hair and every thing—it kinda scared me."

The experience of seeing and being with a large number of dwarfs is an uneasy thing for some little people.

"That's what we refer to as LPA shock," said Sally Bedow. "For a long time, growing up, we live behind our eyes and never really see ourselves. When we come out to a meeting, there we are. For some, getting used to that is very difficult."

The Bedows know their son, Jack, is moving into the darkest days of life as a dwarf. The growth hormones of his average-size classmates at Owatonna High School have kicked in, and each day Jack is losing ground in physical stature.

"This is that time in Jack's life when he will be left behind. His interests change like anybody else at that age, but he can do nothing about it," said Charles. "Now if we lived in a community of all dwarfs, then Jack would be right there. But we don't, nor do we intend to. The world isn't set up that way."

Jack is 4 feet tall, shorter than my 6-year-old, but stocky and solid in his girth. His limbs are disproportionate —characteristic of his dwarfism—and he wears his mane of hair like a well-preened rock star. His voice is deep and guttural like Sylvester Stallone's, and his fantasies are steeped in Rambo-like daydreams.

There is a cute and lovable stuffed-toy quality about him that endears many people to him, his parents say, but a quality that he would be better off without.

"We don't mind the kids understanding that they are different. And that is a fact of life. They are different," said Sally. "But different is not equal to special. You may be different, but you are *not* special.

"That, we fight all the time. Everyone else tries to make those kids special. They make an allowance, let them slide. They'll let him be 20 minutes late for class. If you are allowed to be special all of your life, and you hit adulthood and no one will allow you to be special, then you have nothing to back you up."

Put another way, in Charles Bedow's point-blank vernacular: "Then you are a freak."

"You know, I like cute little kids. Everybody likes cute little kids, and you cut them a lot of slack," Sally said. "You don't find too many cute little adults. By the time they hit adulthood, I expect everybody ought to be pulling his own weight."

The Bedows' gravest fear is that Jack will realize too late that he must make the most of every opportunity. His education is everything because, "Unlike you (an average-size person), Jack can't compete for a ditch-digging job. He's not built for it. He's going to have to use his mind," warned Charles.

"I had to learn that, hey, you're a person too. Nobody's perfect. It's all over about how I got here. It's too late for that now."

Dana Duane

So it is no surprise that the Bedows have hired a tutor to help Jack, who is a freshman in high school who would rather be running in the woods with his dogs, shooting pool and "socializing" downtown, drawing pictures of diabolic characters (and quite well) or watching a certain type of film.

"I love blood-and-guts movies, the bloodier the better," said Jack while waiting to spend time with the tutor, Matt Miller, a close family friend and the son of the Bedows' physician.

One of Jack's textbooks was covered with a glossy advertisement for the U.S. Marine Corps. The yellow lettering, "The Marines," stood out boldly on the olive-drab background. Inside the cover, Jack and his tutor were about to dive headlong into Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet"—which, because of the violence precipitated by the feuding Montagues and Capulets, Jack found mildly entertaining.

Mucking up the war-story-within-the-lovers'-tragedy, however, were all of those lacy names and what he perceived as an insufferable amount of sweet talk.

"Ugggghhhh," he said, shaking his head. "Imagine having your mom naming you *Benvolio* (Romeo's friend) or being a *Cap-u-let?*"

"What do you mean? My uncle's name is Capulet," said Matt, the tutor.

"Oh, sorry, I didn't mean it that way," said Jack. "Romeo's a crybaby, that's what Romeo is. A crybaby."

To Jack Bedow, Owatonna High School may sometimes seem like a forest of blue-jeaned legs.

Jack's feelings about Shakespeare's famous lovers are consistent with his slowly blooming interest in the opposite sex. About girls in general. About growing up.

"Women. Marriage. It just messes you up," he said over a hamburger at dinner.

He later confided that "I like this girl. I guess you could call her good-looking. But she's stuck up," he said in his tough Rambo voice. "She thinks I'm the worst thing on the entire planet."

Both Jack and Dana have dreams. Both have faced tough times. And they will face more when each gets around to marriage and children.

The thing about dwarfism is that it doesn't stop with you. It can get passed on from generation to generation. Achondroplastics, for instance, must face the reality that their odds of bearing dwarfed children are increased.

"If an achondroplastic couple marries, there is a 50 percent chance their children will inherit one of their genes and be achondroplastic," said Beth Ann Bloom, a genetic counselor at St. Paul Ramsey. "But that's not all. There is a 25 percent chance that the child could inherit both genes, which is always fatal. There is a 25 percent chance that the child could be average size."

And some dwarfs don't consider giving birth to an average-size child a blessing. There can be discipline problems that grow out of the difference in size. As a result, many dwarfs are not afraid to have dwarfed children. Some, when presented with the choice, even prefer it.

"You see lots of dwarfs adopting children—dwarfed children," Bloom said. "There is a dwarf couple in the Twin Cities that has adopted its second Korean child with achondroplasia."

But before wedding bells and families, little people must find their way through that dark tunnel of adjustment. Some will try to go it alone. And some will be in Des Moines this coming summer at the national convention.

"People with short stature can be well-adjusted without joining LPA if they accept themselves and are comfortable with themselves," said Bloom. "But that's hard to do without role models. There are very few role models out there in any community. What LPA offers is role models for successful dwarfs."

In her work at Ramsey, Bloom has seen the gamut of society's reaction to dwarfism—everything from new parents blaming it on "the devil" to the most loving, nurturing and concerned mothers and fathers to be found anywhere on earth. The key to the adjustment, though, she said, finally rests with the individual.

"There are doctors to treat a lot of the neurological and bone-disease problems. Carpenters and plumbers to make things easier in the home," Bloom said. "But people in the hospital can't tell us how to fix their souls. There are happy little people and sad little people. We still don't always know how to make the difference."

Bob Ehlert is a staff writer for Sunday Magazine.

ITOYA

ART

PROFOLIO

IA-12-13

China 03